

AA0003701091



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

POEMS

BY

J. LAURENCE HART



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

1881

For George Allen

1881



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



John Fairbank
Laura Fairbank

POEMS

BY

J. LAURENCE HART

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

J. CUMING WALTERS

AUTHOR OF "IN TENNYSON LAND,"

"PHASES OF DICKENS," ETC.

RUGBY: GEORGE E. OVER

1912

J. LAURENCE HART.

Born August 2, 1850; died October, 1907.

An Appreciation by J. CUMING WALTERS.

PR

4759

H4325A11

1912

In the following pages a representative selection is given of the poems of J. Laurence Hart. The volume is in itself a memorial wreath, fashioned from his own work, and gathered by those who loved him in life. Poetry was his pleasure. Few were the days, whether of shine or storm, of sorrow or joy, which did not produce some flower of verse, and it seems fitting that those which retain a dewy freshness and still exhale the sweetness of the man's own spirit, should form a chaplet for his tomb. His main pursuit was art, and his reverent devotion to nature is attested in enduring works treasured by those who possess them; but his passion for all that was beautiful broke forth in song, spontaneously, irrepressibly; and both as artist and poet he deserves remembrance.

Praise and fame, in the ordinary acceptation, he scarcely sought. His life was too gentle and retired and his disposition too modest to seek the acclamation of the crowd; yet a recognition of his merits, too long delayed, would have been dear to him, and the pity of it is that his hopes only came near fulfilment when he "met the Shadow in the path." To preserve and enshrine something of what came from his heart, to exemplify his power, to rescue from time's desert the evidence of his genius, seem to be duties laid upon his friends. It is in this spirit that the preparation of this modest volume has been undertaken.

The poems reveal much of the man himself—his secret desires, his inner thoughts, his self-communing; we find in them his abounding love of nature and his ready response to her moods and influences; and we see his large-hearted love for mankind despite his aloofness from the throng. In

essence the poems are those of a recluse, but they express what many feel, and should therefore possess that potency of appeal which is the final test of true poetry.

Writing in 1893 to a lad of fifteen who had expressed appreciation of his poems, Mr. Hart made these characteristic remarks :—

“To deal with one's personality in actual black and white, other than through the medium of song or art, is distasteful to the sensitive spirit.

The knowledge your letter brings is both cheering and pleasant, as a voice answering the voice of another, the response of humanity to the impersonal utterance of song.

It is for this I sing. I would lay a finger on the chords of the human heart—I would draw the eyes of men to the sweet secrets of Nature's deep strong heart . . . and if I make some stronger for God and Truth, I am repaid.

I am hoping to gather my song children home some day.”

These words well serve as an introduction to the pages which follow, but it is meet also that a little should be said of the author whose name may be new to a considerable proportion of the present readers.

Fifteen years or more have passed since a stranger, tall, stately, and of quiet dignity, called upon me to prefer the simple request that he should be permitted to contribute a poem every week to a paper in the Midlands I was then editing. There was something impressive about my visitor—the well-formed artistic head, the deep studious eyes, the regular features, the long beard, all made up a picture not soon to be forgotten. His delicate and shapely hands were not without their own suggestion, while the richly-toned voice had an arresting power, restrained and controlled as it always was. The stranger was diffident too, diffident to shyness in preferring his request; and,

whilst he awaited an answer, he seemed almost to shrink lest it should be unfavourable and should hurt him like a blow. He had several specimens of his verse with him, and as I glanced them through I realised that here was a singer with a real message. Believing then, as I still believe, that in those poems is a quality which renders them of permanent value, I have gladly participated in the task of preparing this memorial volume. I cannot but have many misgivings, however, as to the selections I have made from his hundreds of poems, all proof of his readiness to receive suggestion and translate it into song, all reminiscent of his pensive moods, and proof of his entire domination by the spirit of beauty. The utmost I can claim is to have chosen representative pieces, though I have put aside very many with genuine regret.

I cannot speak of Mr. Hart as an intimate acquaintance so much as of a friend in close communion, for our paths lay apart. We met only at rare intervals by cross roads, immediately to separate again; his voice was nearly always distant, and his form invisible. Yet I count it as a privilege and a satisfaction that we always felt a closeness to each other, and that there was no severance of the intangible but ever-strengthening ties by which we were united. Years passing by brought knowledge which made me the more admire the man for his many talents, some of them quite unexpectedly revealed; while my regard for him deepened steadily as I knew of the esoteric life he had chosen to live, and of the patience, the endurance, the courage, the greatness of heart, which enabled him to continue it. He had ideals which he never lowered or debased, and in the struggle to reach which he never wavered or turned aside. Judged by ordinary worldly and commercial standards he was scarcely to be deemed successful—how could that possibly be in the case of one so “other-worldly” and so disinterested? He pursued a straight undeviating course, hoping to reach the distant

gleam which beckoned him onwards ; he dreamt of appreciation and fame to come ; he was a knight upon his quest ; and just as he seemed nearing the goal, just as the dimness was passing away and the welcome dawn was breaking—he died. The pathos of Laurence Hart's tragedy is increased by that sudden blotting-out of the prospect of victory on which his yearning vision was fixed. He passed away with only half the illusion dissipated, but I think in his last hours he knew that his toil and his constancy to an ideal had not been in vain. He had wrought well, and though he had not been able to seize his reward, his genius is not without its guerdon. The many pictures he has left depicting nature in her infinite variety and displaying the magic and glamour visible to poetic interpreters, will preserve his name from fading and ensure him a place among the artists of his time ; and I feel convinced that some of these songs he breathed into the air will be found “long, long afterwards” cherished in the hearts of his friends.

Whilst it is necessary to speak of Mr. Hart primarily as the artist, he was altogether too versatile to allow of other matters to be over-looked. Among other things he was a man of remarkable eloquence. I remember that on one occasion, at a small gathering, he was suddenly asked to respond to the toast of literature and art. He at once arose, and poured forth a wealth of beautiful thoughts which simply electrified his audience. The hearers were as if spell-bound while sentence after sentence flowed forth with perfect ease, the language always rich and choice, the glimmering image stealing into it, the sentiment elevated, and the apt quotation, introduced without an effort, adding its gleam to the rushing torrent of speech. It was a perfect piece of oratory, delivered in faultless style. Yet it was only once in a way like this, and on a sudden inspiration, that this shy and reserved man could be induced to speak at all. He was essentially meditative and

introspective, but when there was an outlet for the long-pent-up ideas, they burst from him as in wild and spontaneous music.

As a student of literature he deserves special mention also. He had not only read the poets; he had absorbed them. He knew every good line, every exquisite verse, so it seemed, that had ever been written in praise of nature. Once he wrote a series of idylls of the months, in which he revealed not only what he himself thought of the change and variety of nature's pageantry, but what the poets from Chaucer to Tennyson had said of worth in its praise and celebration. His mind was a storehouse, a treasury of choice extracts, a repository on which he could draw at any moment for the golden words and the shining imagery he desired to use. Himself a poet, as this volume shows, he was none the less so diffident that he almost dreaded his lyric utterances to be heard, and he sent hundreds of songs into the world without seeking the slightest recognition, and still less thinking of the scanty meed which is offered for a poet's wares. It satisfied him to sing, to write, to paint, to live the poet's life remote, to seek out nature in her sweetest and holiest sanctuaries, to use to the best the gifts with which he had been endowed, to devote himself to the priesthood of his art. Doubtless he had his struggles and his time of sadness and despair. But he never forsook the shrine at which he had chosen to worship. He found peace, joy, and compensation in the exercise of his powers, and in his hermit-like retreat at Morfa Nevin he perchance pursued that idyllic existence which Cowley coveted and of which Marvell dreamed. I use no hackneyed term in saying that his character was beautiful, and there was a fragrance about his life which seemed to make all sweet and beautiful about him. No claim is made that he was "great," but he was good, he was genuine, and his genius was manifest.

I do not propose to give many details of Mr. Hart's

career. He himself would not have wished it. A recluse during the greater part of his life, content with a silent priesthood in nature's sanctuaries, he would have dreaded the thought of a publicity beyond that which his actual labours brought him. He can emphatically be deduced from his writings. His note was a sad one in the main, yet not lacking courage; he suffered, but he hoped. The brave and undaunted soul was always shining out despite bar and cloud, and his philosophy was summed up in a poem such as this:—

JUST BE CONTENT.

The Spring that brings the daffodils,
Holds back the buds of May;
In cloudy isles the skylark trills,
Before the cuckoo's lay;
But shall I miss the daffodils,
And mourn below the windy hills,
Because it is not May?

The Summer paints my lady's rose,
Unlids the lily's eyes,
Bids Philomel pour out her woes,
And waste her twilight sighs;
But shall I gather me no rose,
Nor pluck the lily while it blows,
For crave of cooler skies?

When Autumn ruddy-faced and kind,
Smooths out the apple's cheek,
And ripeness floats adown the wind,
And harvest wagons creak,—
Shall I forgo the pippen'd sweet,
And let regret the moment cheat
For boughs my fancies seek?

Be wiser, oh, my seasoned years,
And take what each shall bring;
Crush not the lowly crocus spears
That kiss the feet of Spring,
But finding each day's gift the best,
Just be content, and leave the rest
For others following!

Mr. Hart was born at Harborne, then a pretty old-fashioned suburb of Birmingham, on August 2nd, 1850. His father lived near David Cox, the very name of whom appealed to the artistic instinct of the lad; often, perhaps for no conscious or comprehensible reason, but drawn by the spell of the genius who most strongly appealed to him, Laurence Hart in his childhood would follow the great artist along the quiet roads, even trying to fit his little footsteps to those of the master he revered. The incident is worth recalling as a manifestation of temperament. David Cox was, throughout Mr. Hart's life, his inspirer and guide.

In a leaf of the biography of David Cox, by William Hall, he was found to have written (January, 1899):—

“Happy Artist to have had such a biographer. Happy biographer to have had such a painter on whom to lavish such love and appreciation! How well these pages are known to me! Every word I read is aureoled with early memories of the dear old painter pursuing his tasks in the leafy ways of Harborne; every praiseful word of the Author flames with memories of him under my father's roof. Here is the wedding of affinities indeed! Here is the true solace of labour—the finding of a twin soul to that alongside in joy and sorrow, triumph and failure—gripping hard in the miry shadeful valleys—laughing on the slopes—glad in strength and power on the majestic summits of success. Happy twain! O happy lots! Dear, happy Cox! how well, how deeply I love you. How the record of your life's toiling braces me at my lonely easel. Again, and again, how has it been as the winds of heaven over the heathery moors—fragrant, exhilarating, quickening me to the True, steadfast and immovable to the ideals of my soul. To-day I read again. Aye, and many to-morrows shall fling their dawns around me, and many sunsets find me clinging, hopeful still, because of the tonic of this life, the friendship of a noble man whose eye and heart saw and felt so fully and so well.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Hart's early hopes were not encouraged, and his youth was one of struggle, fears, and disillusion, and the sensitive soul was sorely bruised, though not crushed. The conflict fully tested his quality and proved that the "unquenchable hope" was his. These sorrows left their shadow upon him, and they seem to explain his oft-repeated expressions on the disappointments of life. He had been educated at a Roman Catholic school and trained in the choir of the Oratory which will ever be memorable on account of Cardinal Newman's long connection with it. One of the priests, Father Edward, showed special interest in the pupil, and encouraged his love of books and art. But at the age of seventeen, Laurence Hart, after enduring much distress of mind, became a Protestant, joined the Wesleyans, and threw himself whole-heartedly into lay-work as Sunday School teacher, class leader, and local preacher. Unhappily, this led to a family rupture; he lost the love of his father, a man of considerable wealth, he was forbidden to return home, and eventually was disinherited. In dire need, he turned to art as a means of livelihood, and for years fought the grim fight against poverty and neglect. All this I touch upon with the utmost brevity, accusing none and condemning none; doubtless all that was done was in sincerity; but Laurence Hart was the one who suffered most poignantly for the convictions he held. Can we not see something of the man's own heart in his poem on Disappointment?

How many disappointments wait on life ! Through many doors
 They enter in, and lay an icy hand upon our cherish'd hopes,
 Like blighting frost that chills the heart-blood of the flowers
 Too early ventured on the Winter lap of Earth. The tender bud
 Is rudely nipped, and Sorrow sits awhile with us as guest
 Unquestioned, while our eyes, tear-wet, and sealed, forget
 To-morrow waits upon to-day with chalice full of recompense
 To patient heart and soul of Faith. We know not all
 The moments mean in their bestowments and withholdings;
 What seemeth loss may hide beneath a larger gain,

As lie the flower-germs 'neath the barren sod. Arise,
 My soul! Put on thy strength, as God, through nature
 Teaches thee. Before thine eyes lies wide an open book,
 That thou may'st read how all-wise Wisdom works, and find a balm
 For present pain in laws which urge an end, unseen as yet;
 The Winter reigns! and to our feet the waiting lands are dumb:
 But hidden pulses stir, and currents warm awhile,
 Shall loose the festive fountains of the Spring!

His pictures were exhibited from time to time in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham. With all their indisputable merit, they did not win large favour among the general public. Mr. Hart belonged to the Impressionist school, and his subjects did not always immediately explain themselves. He loved to cast about them a poetic mysticism, to shew Nature in rare moods, to catch strange lights and colours, and to pervade scenes in a glamorous atmosphere which only the initiated could fully understand. It was his very worship of Nature which led him to seek her beauties in secret spots and hallowed shrines; he loved her in radiance and in shadow; he received his impressions instantaneously and could reproduce them long after with faithfulness and charm. His "Footsteps of Night," "The Floodgates," "Birdingbury," "The Garden of Sleep," and "The Meadow—Moonlight," probably represent his power at its highest.

Laurence Hart had the capacity of visualising scenes and making them visible to other eyes. Many of his poems seem to be an invitation to come and gaze upon those things which gave him pleasure and brought him enchantment; they bid us enter into his mood, to commune with him in the wood, the vale, the far-spread meadow, the bracing hill-top, and to pierce to the secret of Nature's excellence. Laurence Hart is always companionable in his writings, and seems to make us his fellow-traveller and his friend. His was no selfish enjoyment of the good he found—he spoke, he sang, he appealed, that others might share his raptures and partake of the consolation and

solace that he found. And thus in his gentle way he became a leader and teacher—a leader into pleasant paths, and a teacher of good cheer and hope and fortitude.

He was fond of retrospection, of calling up memories tinted with gold or dimmed with tears. But never have I found in his poems a trace of bitterness. Even when he lamented most his tone was resignation. Nor must it be forgotten that he found in his intense and fervid religious faith the balm he so often needed, and though shadows might be about him he believed in a divine purpose working through all. His life was in this respect an example and an inspiration.

As to the poems in general, they practically divide themselves into lyrics of the four seasons during which every tint and shade dear to the poet's eye is reproduced, and every thought suggested by them set down in appropriate lines. There is an atmosphere about all that Mr. Hart wrote which is comparable to the atmosphere of a picture: he takes the scene as it presents itself to the artist-eye, endeavours to paint it in radiance or in sombre grey, and not infrequently adds "the gleam—the light that never was on land or sea, the consecration and the poet's dream." In all this work there is no pretentiousness, no suggestion that the poet thought he was engaged upon great work—rather is it suggested to us that he "sang because he must," and that he relieved a full heart of those melodies which nature herself whispered to him in all sweetness. The artlessness of it all is most apparent, and constitutes its chief charm.

In making a selection from the very considerable number of Mr. Hart's poems, I have aimed at securing a representative few—those which denote the constant trend of his thought, those which bring out his salient characteristics as author and man. I found many repetitions of subjects, due, no doubt, to habitual state of mind. But I would point out that if frequently he dwelt upon griefs,

disappointments, and the more sombre side of things, he never grew morbid, and however plangent the note he struck, the conclusion was hopeful and happy. He was no moping and complaining sophist; as with Dr. Johnson's philosophic friend, "cheerfulness was always breaking in." There was a delicacy, a refinement of spirit in Mr. Hart which prevented him from dulness and despair; easily moved and quickly responsive to the mournful undertone in nature, he none the less was fortified with a faith in all things, and refused to be cast down. Thus, not one of his poems ends in the minor key—he calls for courage even while revealing acute sensitiveness to a blow of adversity, or when manifesting sympathy with a soul stricken by tragedy. Upon this phase in his poems I like to dwell, knowing so well that only the truly heroic nature could have displayed it.

One of his last poems, written in dire illness and in much anxiety, is a self revelation of importance. It was penned on the first April day of 1907 and he called it "My Share"—the share of a man whom fortune had so often spited, and whose day was drawing to its dim close.

In all the glad things of this April day
 I have a share ;
 The garden bushes in their bright array,
 The drumming bees, the thrushes' maled lay ;
 The happy living stir
 Around me everywhere !
 The young Spring's maiden play,
 All, all are mine to share !

And if winged pleasures flutter in the sun
 Of memoried years.
 When youth's high rapture like the morning shone,—
 And deeds were only summits to be won ;
 Though capped by years
 Thought but endears
 The golden remnant of the sands unrun
 Though Fame be in arrears.

I cavil not with Fortune (fickle sprite),
 Give, or withhold.
 If life has dower of worship and delight
 In simple things—the world's brave might
 In cloth of gold
 Hard-aged and bold
 May pass—I have a fairer sight,
 Undreamed, untold !

These lines are particularly worth noting, for it was so destined that Laurence Hart's life-battle should be waged to the last. The great heroic soul was still engaged in an uneven contest with fate. A heavy cloud, arising from private misfortune, hung over his last year, and the sensitive spirit showed signs of sinking. On October 23rd, 1907, his eyes closed ; and then, too late, eager words of praise were poured upon him. Not in vain had a noble and disinterested life been lived if only for its influence upon those around.

The Welsh have a beautiful custom of showing respect for those who have dwelt among them and won their special favour. The whole community takes part in the funeral ceremony, the coffin being borne to its last resting place first by one party, then another, and the changes made so frequently that it can truly be said that every hand has helped in the reverent and solemn task. This was the honour accorded Laurence Hart by the people of Morfa Nevin, all differences of race and sects being forgotten in the desire to pay him the last human tribute. It was a touching scene, eloquent as pathetic, and the spirit of the dead man might at last have exulted that a gracious life of benign influence and faithful labour had not been without its crown of victory.

January, 1912.

FANCIES BY THE WAY

AN OLD-FASHIONED WORLD

I SOMETIMES wonder, as I walk,
On lonely musings bent,
To hold, unheard, a voiceless talk
With flower and firmament,

Why Spring should paint the primrose hue,
As deftly as she did
When Eden budded, young and new,
And man's designs were hid.

How strangely old—old-fashioned, all
The work the seasons show !
Without remission, or recall,
As softly as the snow,

She decks the daisy's disc, as when
The first morn saw it rise,
And eyes perchance of happy men
Shone with a glad surprise.

She clothes the lily white, the rose
With Love's divinest dyes ;
Above us poise the cloudy flocks,
In changeless, changing skies.

The throstle pipes no newer note
Than deathless Shakespeare heard ;
For us the sky-lark's fountain through
The soul of Milton stirred !

October sets the scarlet hip,
Beside the purple sloes—
Still curves the mushroom's satin'd lip,
And pearls the thistle's hose ;

Paves out the forest-aisles with gold,
In ruby robes the thorn ;
Spins bridal veils of mist to fold
About the frosty morn.

And yet we scorn old-fashioned things !
Had we the will to do,
Perhaps, our scientific springs
Would boast a bluer blue ;

Change lives on change, till, overfed,
It wearies as a child,
And longs to lay its fevered head
On banks where once it smiled

In innocence of trust that pried
No further than it saw,
And ate the manna satisfied
Ungrown of wheaten straw.

What will of mine may never shape,
Old-fashioned Nature frames,
Inconstancy dry bones may drape
And classify with names.

I wander further back—at ease
From vaulting feats of man,
Content to have the eye that sees
Where Paradise began.

THE PHANTOM FIRE

THE red glow of the firelight flared
 A phantom image through the pane,
 Across the path where shadow stirred
 Before the Spring day's chilly wane,
 I watch'd it as it danced and leapt,
 And in my heart a sweet thought crept.

To nestle as the birds to rest
 Deep in the yew tree's scented shade ;
 Nor moved I from my watching, lest
 The ghostly tongues that danced and played
 Should melt into the darkling night,
 And oust my thought to aimless flight.

But as the darkness grew and hid
 The children in its cold embrace,
 And only tuneful voices slid
 Their gladness 'tween its fading grace,
 The warm light glowed with richer tone :
 My thought to flower had quickly blown !

*The fires of noble deeds, and true,
 The love that burned on altars pure,
 Again on forward paths we view :
 The past unseen—they still endure—
 The phantom fires that dance and leap,
 Our pathway to the land of sleep !*

THE UNSEEN

IF unto us the seen is fair,
That all about us lies,
Shall we not climb the unseen stair,
That winds unto the skies?

The skies where viewless planets shine,
Where suns unsetting burn,
Beyond the dusky twilight line
That belts each questful turn.

The eyes of intellect may scan
Each miracle of God,
That flames upon the path of man,
And man remain unshod

For roadways to the spirit shown—
The undiscovered land,
Soul intuitions only, own—
Beyond Time's shady strand.

O, for the seeing heart, the eyes
Of feeling deep and pure :—
Love's vision that can recognise
The Truth that shall endure.

WHEN THE CHILDREN ARE AWAY

THE door is open to the night,
And all the rooms are still ;—
A muteness over which no might,
Or wish of mine hath will,
Sits sphinx-like by the hearth and hall,
On empty chair and pictured wall.

The door is open to the night—
The night that falleth sweet ;
I mark no more the swallow's flight,
I listen for returning feet—
For voices of the children, when
The place with mirth shall sing again.

The door is open to the night,
But as I watch, I catch
The glimmerings of muslin white,
The gleeful click of garden latch ;
The silence vanishes—once more
The house is Home, and shut the door !

VISIONS IN THE NIGHT

WITH wakeful eyes that slumber woos
 In vain I peer about
 The sea of thought wherein I cruise
 While all the stars are out—
 A long, long voyage, rudderless,
 A weary, aimless drift,
 Ah! me, I wish the stars would fade,
 And let the morning lift.

For Fancies, like the sea-gulls, wing
 In circles round and round,
 I hear the waves' deep murmuring,
 But whither am I bound?
 A pathless deep behind, before—
 A wilderness of sea,
 Without a hope, without a shore,
 Or harbour light for me!

The vision changes! faces grim,
 Like snowflakes, crowd and stare,
 From worlds afar, and regions dim,
 And bodiless as air,
 They leer, and laugh, in demon jest,
 In wild confusion blent,
 Until as surges seeking rest
 Their mimicry is spent.

Once more a change! Soft elfin strains
 Break tuneful on my ears,
 Low cadences like summer rains
 That fill the woods with tears:
 And on and on the dreary waste,
 With calm and wind I drift,
 Until the watching stars shall fail,
 And let the morning lift.

A MOOD

SOME odd volume, some old ditty,
 Shall be mine to-night.
I crave me neither love nor pity,
 Passion nor delight,
But to feel the sharp rain falling
 Through the moonless night.

I would feel the moor-wind blowing,
 Scent the heather's lip ;
Hark the naked storm scythe mowing
 Over ridge and dip,
Bared, unbowed before the wrestler's
 All-devouring grip.

Let me see the white-mist maidens
 Leap the boggy pools :
Follow into unknown aidens,
 Led by star-eyed ghouls—
Through the purple-painted spaces,
 From the tongues of fools.

Some old singer—half forgotten,
 Shall be mine to-night—
Some old shelf—moth-eaten—rotten,
 Fancy shall re-light,
While the sharp rain brawling, falling,
 Drowns the winter night.

IN FAIRYLAND

LEND me your tongues, O elves of the islands,
 Girt with the sea of immortals ;
 Lend me your eyes, and your gossamer pinions,
 To hie me from earth's cloudy portals !
 Give me the draught of the chalice supernal,
 The fruit that enpurples, untouched of decay,
 Gird me with gladness, and banish all sadness,
 Come ! fairies of Fairyland, bear me away !

See ! from the heart of the odorous rose—
 Down stairways of starlight they hasten !
 On the breasts of the ripples the river is flashing—
 From valleys the twilight doth cherish, and chasten.
 From bells where the bees were summer-long trysting,
 From flags 'neath the willows, from lily cups white,
 With the glow-worm's wan torches—from cavernous
 porches,
 On bat's wing and bell-note they throng on my sight.

Through echoless aisles of the winter—red-berried—
 Where winds mouth their madness uncurbed,
 Through sunsets that burn brief vigils o'er shroudings,
 Of snow-forests, dumb, undisturbed,
 The elves of the Isles of Enchantment come singing,
 Gay sprites of the eves of midsummers dead ;
 With will-o-wisps' eerie, from dark days and dreary,
 They bear me to where the immortals are wed !

THE PAGE TURNED DOWN

SOMETIMES we come to it again—
 A moment from the thralling throng,
 A dead flower from a summer lane—
 The lilt of some old-fashioned song;
 We halt with tears in eye and heart,
 A memory no floods can drown,
 It is a sacred thing apart—
 The page of life turned down.

What hopes and joys are hidden there,
 No other knows, no other heeds:
 They flowered a moment—but the air
 Blew cold and chill, and memory bleeds!
 Across the blue the angry cloud;
 The icy breath that doth imbrown;
 Ah me! my heart to-night is bowed
 Before the page turned down.

Dear volume of my life, my heart
 Is often tired, and often sad,
 And sometimes from the noisy mart
 Thy folded places heal and glad;
 And all is now—or yonder—I
 Have bygone shrines of sweet renown,
 And chiefest to the inward eye
 The page of life turned down.

A CHALLENGE TO CHEERFULNESS

'Tis a weary way through the cloudy day,
 To the scent and song of June ;
 The wind is chill that around the hill
 Makes bitter the Winter noon.

And some in the wearier glooms of life.
 May call it an idle dream,
 With memories cold, of the suns of old,
 That never again shall gleam.

But O, if your ears have heard, as mine,
 On the topmost ash, a-sway—
 The carolling thrush, in the windy rush
 That raced from the spumy bay :

You had learned again to take heart, and greet
 This mate of the mirth of June,
 Who, up on his perch, the sea-wind's lurch,
 Sings through the Wintry noon :

Sings—with a heart red-ripe for bliss.
 To his sweetheart, harkening nigh,
 Of a songful nest below her breast,
 Though the North-wind rakes the sky !

THE WELL-WORN ROAD

Is not every life full of a pettiness of detail, a continuous monotony of repetition? This is the well-worn road we all travel . . . and let the track be rough or smooth, high or low, there will be times in the journey when every wayfarer's heart will expand to embrace a joy or contract under the sting of a sharp agony.—*Holm Lee.*

OTHERS before me, weary as I,
 Under the rain, and burning sky,
 Have trodden in faith and fear ;
 Ah ! how the tramp of the toiling feet
 Beats into my brain in the dust and heat,
 As I rest by the milestone here !

Sometimes a level, easy and straight,
 Seemed it a dance to the golden gate
 Of the kingdom of desire ;
 Sometimes sweet with the sea-salt air,
 And Hope blown up from the everywhere,
 And the sky arch higher and higher !

Sometimes rough as the ribbed-rock side,
 Deep and dark it would grimly stride
 To the awful caves of death ;
 Till the falt'ring foot held back, and beat
 The heart in agony of defeat
 And cold with its bated breath.

And ever through all the changing moons
Grows still the tramp like the ceaseless runes
Of the surf on shingly floor ;
For ever—through rise and set of days,
In sorrow and laughter, mourning and praise,
Presses heel unto heel the more !

Wayfarers all on the dusty track,
Tethered to Toil and to Duty's pack,
Task-mastered every one ;
The Dead who have passed have nothing to say,
There is but a *print* on the well-worn way,
And the Living are passing on !

TO THOSE WHO SPIN AND TOIL

IN the green heart of the forest
 Let me weave a leafy rhyme,
 For the hearts that need it sorest,
 For the ears that hear no chime
 But the Babel call to toil,
 Lest should fail the cruise of oil !

Had I wit to score the gladness,
 Ye should feel the balmy breath
 In the winter of your sadness,
 In the chambers of your death ;
 Ye should see with tearless eyes
 The rounded blue of sunny skies.

Had I skill to catch the measure
 Of the forest songs, and sing,
 Ye should know the tranquil pleasure
 Of the summer's solacing ;
 Music from the birds' free heart,
 Should float into your Babel-mart.

Ye should hear the sound of sickle,
 Through the barley fields, aglow ;
 Ye should hark the streamlet's trickle
 Echo with its laughter, low—
 Soothful scenes and sweetened air
 Should bless ye as the peace of prayer.

Could I flash this warmth and shining,
Trust it on yon swallow's wing—
Sun-smiles from the fern's entwining,
From the willow-mirrored spring—
Ye, methinks, with gladlier hope
Should bear the stress of labouring slope.

Ye should learn, if slow believing,
How the sweet day follows night;
How earth's shadows, and its grieving,
Shall have end, sometime, in light;
Ye should bless the forest's speech,
And trust to heaven's succouring reach.

CAST DOWN BUT NOT DESTROYED

FROM whence this mournful mood, all joy dispelling,
 That on my spirit sets its icy chill,
 Like winter's snowy shroud, that round my dwelling
 Yet rests the shoulders of the greening hill?

I had some cherished dreams of Spring awaking :
 Within—serener thought began to flow—
 Now through my brain a tumult fierce is raking—
 Outside, comes thick and fast the blinding snow.

Too quick was I—too warm with sweet desiring—
 I held not cold aloof, like yonder oak,
 But touched by tiniest spark of Fancy's firing,
 Hope's branches bloomed, unheeding this fell stroke.

So flashed the moment's glow, as sudden disappearing,
 A gleam of gladness shot from dismal skies—
 The pure, Diviner calm, like sunsets' clearing,
 That blesses weary day, ere daylight dies.

Thus ever strife and peace ; the wrestling ills unsparing,
 The under-whisper of a day unborn ;
 Art tired ? Look thou beyond the hard hour's faring,
 God hides His roses in the Winter thorn.

A PLEA FOR LEISURE

WAYFARER, whose swift feet o'ertake
 My laggard step, by dreaming tied—
 Why hurriest so? And what thy stake—
 The way is long, the world is wide.

Spare, prithee, of thy running breath
 To hold such converse as may fit ;
 His not all loss that tarrieth
 Among the golden days to sit ;

With flower, and weed, in common need,
 To bask beneath the azured tent,
 While Nature shapes the future seed
 To sow the fields of thine intent.

Why lure the eye with ghostly goals,
 Forgetful of the sense that cries—
 Unsatisfied with stinted doles—
 For food the living hour supplies?

The white-browed noon—the sunset shore,
 Where ebbs the purple sea of day
 Unto the Night that evermore
 In silent darkness drinks away ;

The moon's soft parley—twilight still—
 The stars above the moorlands mute ;
 The shadows nestling to the hill,
 When down mill sluices owlets hoot ;

The gloom whose ebon caverns awe,
 And hold divulgeless all they breed ;
 Charm'd mystery, in whose toiling maw
 Uncanny incarnations feed ;

The scarring storm's tempestuous wake,
 Where winds, unbaffled, whip like thongs,
 And o'er the thundery cloud-vans break
 Grim Rudra-led, their frenzied songs.

The windless dawn, whose kisses lure
 The river into laughter rare,
 And like some god-inpassioned wooer,
 Pours gifts divine of light and air ;

Warm, flowery breathings of delight,
 Of heaven winnow'd—pure as dew—
 The effluence of a gladness white
 As thrones of pearl on aerial blue ;

Hours whose enchantments are the lutes
 Of no false siren to destroy :
 Fine ecstasies their spirit flutes
 From out the golden pipes of joy ;

These, these with ardours would entice
 From mundane cares and murky aims,
 From greed whose utmost farthing's price,
 If wet with blood, it surely claims ;

Sphered wonders orb our swelt'ring way,
 Flash forth their radiance as we tread
 Through glimmering mazes—half at bay
 Before the sphinx's brazen head :

These, these the genii that disarm
 The spells that hold us to the earth,
 And keep us poised, and free from harm
 To breathe the air of larger birth !

NIGH

"Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played upon: it is dissipation. Humility, like darkness, reveals the heavenly lights."— *Walden*.

I HOLD a creed that quiet eye and passive will
may meet
With unexpected pleasures unfound of search-
ful feet.

We take our pilgrim staff too oft for golden
goals afar,
And crush the flower below our feet in quest of
wandering star.

We urge our spirit's pace uncurbed o'er common
levels—spurned,
To find at weary halting hour the bush which
never burned.

Knights errant, with Quixotic steel we push for
sorceried shore—
For moons and suns and dawns and eves we
saw not at our door.

The far hills grow the gayest green—the un-
possessed, possessed
Of all the balm of Gilead to heal our mad un-
rest.

To brazen altars we would trend with sacrifice
unclean,
All through the shining aisles of God, to wor-
ship the Unseen;

Untempered by the tempered light of glory
 swung around,
Of days and nights that coronate each step as
 hallowed ground !

Cease ye from searching ! cease, and wait, in
 lowliness attired,
The passing of the angel hosts with sunset hues
 affired ;

List ye the latticed song that greets your morn-
 saluted ears,
Cleanse ye your eyes in liliated light from un-
 corrupted spheres ;

Off pilgrim shoes ! Unshod, unshod ! let staff
 and buckler lie,
Pray ye for simple hearts that find God's ever-
 sweetest Nigh.

BEHIND THE PLOUGH

THE ploughshare ribs the winter fields
 With furrows straight :
 The red leaf flutters on the bough—
 Its farewell late.

And slowly up, and slowly down,
 Old Robin drives
 His sturdy team—till hungry noon—
 Till twilight hives

Each haggard gleam of fainting light,
 With thrifty care,
 And sets her sentinels of mist,
 Through valleys bare !

Where late the tuneful sickle sang
 The reaper's hymn,
 The stubble's sallow nakedness
 Is cold and grim ;

Flown every gentle charm that graced
 The summer hours.
 With loveliness of laughing light,
 And feast of flowers.

Weep forth your woe, O dreary skies !
 The furrows wait
 To drink the sorrow of your thought
 For earth's hard fate.

Wail, winds, that herald winter snows,
 While furrows keep
 The harvests that to-morrow's suns
 Shall ripe and reap.

DEAD LEAVES

OF thee, dead leaves, I sing,
 That erstwhile sang to me,
 Through azured-hours of Spring,
 In summer revelry.

Dead days are shrined in thee ;
 Cast vestments of a time,
 When gladness wandered free,
 From morn to even chime ;

When joy piped as the birds ;
 When sweet desire grew strong ;
 When like new wine, its words,
 When thought was only song !

And now, when heedless feet,
 But crush thee in the mire,
 Bedrenched with rain and sleet,
 I string once more my lyre

In winter days, and dark,
 Of thee, dead leaves, to sing,
 That when the wold is stark,
 Bring back the suns of spring,

The light of love, and youth,
 The lily-vestured days,
 Pure as the face of Truth,
 Sweet as the breath of praise.

PIPPIN TIME

I LOVED the golden pippin time,
 When life was young,
 When like the pleasant sound of rhyme,
 To music sung,
 The seasons all, were all to me
 Festivity.

Then, indiscretion found the way
 To russet stores,
 As blithely as in merry May,
 Through leafy shores,
 It hunted for the nested thrush,
 With face aflush.

And now, through rime-besprinkled years,
 The vision comes
 Of lads and lasses free of fears,
 'Mid purple plums,
 And giant codlings near the sky,
 That filch'd a sigh.

But some are gone, and some are old ;
 While pippins glow
 Among the thinning leaves of gold
 As long ago ;
 For ever thus the Autumn brings
 Her offering

To fill the lap of age and youth :—
 Great Nature's tryst,
 Unchanged through earth's unrest and ruth,
 Its sun and mist,
 As bounteous as when Eden bore
 Her virgin store.

LEISURED DAYS

LIKE some far azure-girdled moon,
Unto the Harvest night,
Lifting a golden face a-swoon,
Above the waving white ;

So here and there, calm, isolate,
We count our leisur'd days—
Still pools amid life's fretful spate,
The green of dusty ways.

Brighter for circling darkness, deep,
Stillier for the roar
Of bleaching torrent's rush and sweep
Adown the rock-scoop'd floor ;

Slim margins on the graven scroll
Of Time's indenture stern,
Where to the half-blind, sense-bound soul,
Unwritten lessons burn.

RESTLESSNESS.

My heart is restless—the busy hours
Have tossed it to and fro—
To and fro, as the woods are bent,
When the wintry tempests blow.

And the waning day in silence dies,
Dies as I watch and wait ;
Moment by moment deeper shade
Sweeps over the Western gate.

Solemn and slow, with unhasting step,
Into the far unknown,
Goes the day from my fever'd grasp—
The day I had called my own ;

Goes with its myriad thoughts and fears,
Its effort and discontent—
The work, maybe, of a master-mind,
Or rude disfigurement.

Over me shimmer the stars, in peace,
Round me the shadows creep :
Come near, O Night, with thy gentle touch,
And soothe with the gift of sleep !

THE HILLSIDE OF THE YEAR

UPON the hillside of the year
 The poppy burns, the golden ear
 To harvest fills,—
 When pippins blink on orchard boughs,
 And russet tones begin to drowse
 Among the hills.

Upon the hillside of the year
 We greet the robin's dainty cheer,
 And find again
 The vanish'd light of younger days—
 The chords of half-forgotten lays
 In his dear strain.

Upon the hill-side of the year
 The wonder of the Spring is clear,
 And clearer still
 The vexed and troubled winter stress,
 That hid the power to give and bless
 In seeming ill.

Upon the hillside of the year
 The heart of Nature beateth near,
 And warm and strong
 The juicy tide of plenty flows,
 And flowing, deeper, grander grows
 Its mellow song.

Upon the hillside of the year
 With gathered riches why should fear
 Or hunger be?
 And on Life's ever-west'ring slope,
 O God, so little light and hope
 When men have Thee?

A HARVEST IDYLL

BUT late, I chanced on wistful age,
 In harvest fields of gold,
 For him no longer toil brought wage,
 His years were full nigh told.

Yet hither drawn by instinct deep
 In his rough nature sown,
 He loves to see the reapers reap,
 Though he must watch alone.

On knotty staff his thews had cut
 In winters long ago
 From some wild copse of hazel nut,
 He bent his body low ;

Frail with the buffetings of years,
 The drain of ceaseless moil—
 Of rugged sorrows—honest tears—
 The heritage of toil.

Yet even as I looked, his eye
 Grew brighter as he swept
 The grain-fields sloping to the sky ;
 His mem'ry stirr'd and leapt :

New life pulsed through his thinning veins,
 As he once more beheld
 The graceful shocks—the freighted wains,
 Like the brave days of eld.

His rheumy fingers itched to grip
 The sickle, tried and true,
 And follow blithely, heel and hip,
 The golden billows through.

And when I spoke, he answered not—
 The bygone held him so,
 And led him to this trysting spot,
 Where old-time flowers might blow.

* * * *

The red sun dipt below the hill,
 The reapers' work was done ;
 Above the church tower, pure and still,
 The moon of Harvest shone !

* * * *

When next I passed the churchyard yew,
 The wintry trees were bare :
 Old Time had gathered sheaf anew,
 My aged friend was there !

A MEMORY

'TWEEN bracken and boulder, the brown burn is leaping,
 As it leaped in the years long ago,
 And laughing the louder, when hills are a-weeping,
 When up in the glen the wind-bugles blow ;
 But the bonnie, braw graces—
 The winsome, glad faces,
 That beamed like the sunshine on heather and stone,
 Have vanished like mist from the rock-haunted places,
 The light o' the valley has flown !

The blue lake is silent, its sweet secrets hiding,
 As it hid in the long years ago,
 But on its broad bosom the shadows are gliding,
 And the wind-ripples flit to and fro ;
 But the shy, sheeny glances—
 The blithe maiden fancies,
 That flasht like a mere with summer light strown,
 Are but as a dream that the moment entrances,
 The light o' the valley has flown !

The heather may purple, the whin's yellow blacken,
 The curlew wail over the moor ;
 The red hand of autumn may crimson the bracken,
 The mists lie a-sleeping, the spate rush and roar ;
 But the bonnie, braw graces,
 The winsome, glad faces,
 That beamed like the sunshine on heather and stone,
 Have vanished like mist from the rock-haunted places,
 The light o' the valley has flown !

THE POET'S GIFT

THOUGHT took up the poet's page, and strayed
 among the flowers,
 And in its joy forgot that Time was woof of
 fleeting hours ;
 With leisured step, forgetful, dreamed the present
 out of sight,
 By singing stream, and fragrant bowers led
 on by pure delight.

Love chanced upon forgotten chords, and swept
 its dusty lyre
 With fingers passionate and strong—with touch
 of early fire !
 Forth leapt the spirit of the past—the laughter
 of its spring—
 When Hope was bright as silver cloud below
 the lark's flush'd wing.

Need shut the poet's page and plied in harsher
 tone her wants,
 And pointing to life's toiling ways, bade leave
 the fabled fonts ;
 I rose obedient, when behold ! the water changed
 to wine,
 My heart was lightened of its load, the poet's
 gift was mine !

TRADITION

IN hoary haunts, and hoarier than all wherein
 she dwells,
 She greets you, leisure-footed, her garments
 rimed with mould;
 From dust-encrusted centuries she manipulates
 her spells,
 And wraps you in her shadows, invisible, and
 cold.

O Witch fantastic, in whose eye the dead past
 sleeps—as some
 Black tarn may shroud the blue of cloudy
 heights remote;
 O awesome Witch that thrillst though no living
 utterance come
 To listening ears that wait beside thy spectral
 throat;

Of yesterday thou art, whose protean shape not
 ever
 Hath visioned eye, save dreaming o'er the
 idle, myth-mouthed tales,
 Elusive, futureless, a mock to curious endeavour,
 Like fitful will-o'-wisps in twilight tangled
 vales;

In peace hold thou thy ghostly keeps, and
 speechless, speak, while bowed,
 We hold dumb converse with the still, sur-
 rendered days,
 And walk with thee, Tradition, through thy
 phantom-peopled crowd
 That wake no more the echoes in the dead
 environed maze.

THE ENCHANTED VALLEY

WHERE is the valley golden,
Where never a shadow lies,
Where joys are as roses folden,
The light as the morning skies?

I met a maid who had found it,
With eyes like the flush of dawn,
A mouth with a sweetness round it,
More gentle than breath of fawn.

I chanced on a child, lap-laden,
With lilies its garden grew—
But never the child or maiden
Could tarry to show me through.

I heard them pass me in laughter—
Playful and free as the wind,
And day unto day, long after,
I wandered in hope to find

Where lieth the valley golden,
Where never a shadow lies,
Where joys are as roses folden,
Where day has no sunset skies!

WHEN SUMMER BOUGHS WERE GREEN

DEAR heart, we are growing older,
And the leaves begin to fall,
Some tints in our sky are colder,
And some are not there at all;
For the strong years in their flowing,
Through cloud and light serene,
Make us think of the sweet thyme blowing,
When the summer boughs were green.

Dear heart, we are growing older,
For the world stands never still;
Time every day gets bolder,
As we jog adown the hill,
But the days are brighter, dearest,
For the days that were, I ween,
For the love we pledged each other,
When the summer boughs were green.

Dear heart, we are growing older,
And the winter snow is nigh,
But on our life's bent shoulder,
We can hear the robin cry!
The leaves of age may be round us,
The frost of his breath be keen,
But never shall die the love we found
When the summer boughs were green.

THE SUNSET OF THE HEART

THERE'S beauty in the curling wave,
 Upon the fleecy foam,
That restless, flashes in the light,
 That trembles o'er its home ;
There's beauty in the misty morn,
 When life begins to start,
But give to me beyond it all,
 The sunshine of the heart !

There's beauty on the mountain height,
 And in the valley still ;
A glory in the river's flight,
 And in the laughing rill :
There's beauty in the forest dim,
 Alone, divine, apart :
But give to me beyond it all,
 The sunshine of the heart !

There's beauty in the swallow's curve,
 The moor-hen on the lake :
In summer's sweet suspended hours,
 In winter's snowy flake ;
There's beauty in each season sent,
 Beyond the ken of art,
But give to me, beyond it all,
 The sunshine of the heart !

The morn may cloud, the noon despoil,
The swallow haste away :
The summer fail, the winter grim,
Hush bird and river's lay :
Yet could I see them all take wing,
Without a pain or smart,
If I but hold the keys that keep
The sunshine of the heart.

The day may end in fiery clouds
Across the brow of night,
The vision of earth's loveliness
Pale on the sinking sight,
Yet still no raven's wing of gloom
Can bid my joys depart,
There is no night to overcome
The sunshine of the heart.

AN ODE TO FAME

O GODDESS, statuesque and cold,
 If I afar have worshipped thee,
 Nor ever yet my soul hath told
 The urge of its intensity :—
 The red blood of its fervency
 Still courses through my swollen veins,
 As winter-fed, more angrily
 The mountain brook its bounds disdains.

Cursed by the syren glance that lures
 To vanity, and Hope's excess,
 Whose selfish, pouting power immures
 Each abject slave, without caress :—
 For thee, the virgin happiness
 Of youth, and Friendship's sunny smile —
 Dear life's divinest tenderness,
 Have blent in sacrificial pile !

Thy promised bays, with baleful light,
 Gleam through the sullen night of toil,
 Bright burning o'er each treach'rous height
 Ambition marks without recoil,—
 O hateful, mocking wisp to spoil,
 The palsied palms so feebly hold,
 E'er crumbling to their native soil,
 They are as thee—great Goddess—cold !

Disdainful, in proud Titan mien,
 Thy slain-enmoulded shrine is stained
 With blood, and foolish tears between
 Footstools the victor'd few have gained ;
 While yet thou scorn'st the Spartan-brained
 Each Time-begotten day brings forth,
 To tread by thy fierce beauty chained
 The path of thy capricious wrath.

Go, Goddess ! thy unhallowed charms
 No longer shall befool my sight ;
 Come thou not near with proffered arms
 Of embrace ! Go, thou mocking Might !—
 Thou whose fair fingers touch to blight
 With Disappointment's bolted-cloud :
 Go ! leave me toil, till Death's long night
 Shall hide me with the unwreathed crowd.

THE SPELL
OF
THE SEASONS

SPRING

A JANUARY DAY

A RIFT of gold beneath the leaden grey,
So ends the dreary January day.

A day of anger, and of fierce menace,
Without one smile upon its chilling face !

Birth-time of winds whose fury leaves
The forest maimed. Alas ! my spirit grieves

Before this spoil of Winter, and I fain
Would have the days of Summer back again !

But vain my wish—her sunny joys are fled,
And beauty everywhere is stricken—dead !

Yet with yon gleam I gather hope, and sing,
Beyond the shadow lies the border-land of Spring !

A DAY IN FEBRUARY

MANY a memory haunts to-day,
 The chamber of my brain,
 As o'er the miry, soddened way,
 I buffet with the rain—

The February rain, and chill,
 With icicles and sleet,
 That drives with harsh, relentless will
 Its wrath unto my feet.

The weary trees are shivering,
 And stung with winter spite,
 Stretch out their branches quivering
 Within the vapoury light.

The frightened thrush has flown and left
 A tim'rous note of pain,
 To nestle somewhere, lone, bereft,
 With me, and this cold main.

Oh! day of loneliness and woe,
 The heart has chronicle
 Of hours in life's uneven flow
 That bear thine image well ;

Hours when the spirit's light is quenched
 Beneath the shroud of care,
 When every hope is torn and drenched
 As these stark uplands, bare ;

When sorrow presses out the tears,
As do the clouds the rain,
To bathe the bleach'd face of our fears
As this rude spray the plain.

And yet, so surely as beyond
This mournfulness shall rise
A day dissolving every bond
That prisons earth and skies ;

A day of fragrance and of flowers,
Of joyous light and song,
So shall earth's dreariest, darkest hours
Yield recompense ere long.

SPRING

BLUE-EYED Spring ! with fairy feet,
 Thou trippest o'er the meadows sweet,
 And cowslip bells, and daisies white,
 Look up to bless the gladsome sight.
 With odorous breath, and voice of song,
 For which the year has waited long,
 Once more with us thou keepest tryst,
 By pearly light and violets kissed.

How blush the willows by the stream !
 How laughingly the waters gleam
 By shooting rush and marigold,
 And mirror back the days of old--
 When heart was young, and Hope was high,
 And only sunshine bathed the sky :
 When hand in hand with Spring's delight,
 Love's morning filled our happy sight.

O gentle guest, if April tears
 Hang on thine eyelids, and our fears
 Of Winter torment be not hushed,
 The westering winds thy tresses brushed,
 Are tender as thy snowy breast,
 Where plum and cherry blossom rest
 In virgin vestments, pure and proud,
 Disdainful of the threatening cloud.

Fill up our cup, and let us taste
The joy thou givest, lest it waste
And be no more. Thou wilt not stay,
O song of thrush and cuckoo gay ;
Pipe for us long, and let the strain
Revive the thought of youth again,
When in thy presence life was May,
And every hour kept holiday.

Many a garland dost thou weave,
For eyes that mourn and hearts that grieve,
And bid men from their Winter gloom
Arise, dear guest, and give *Thee* room :
For bursting bud, and song of bird,
Hold prophecy of surer word,
Than doubt, that digs a daily grave,
While all unseen God's blossoms wave.

RENEWAL

OVER the blind starved fields there went
A presence veiled, but with consent,
The wolds awoke, and flowery eyes
Returned the welcome of the skies.

Cloud-hidden in seraphic bliss,
Dropt note to note, and kiss to kiss,
The Spring unprisoned lark to her
Who lowly dwelt in nested care ;

The forest flushed—each dusky limb
Gave answering voice with leafy hymn ;
While hill and valley made reply—
“ Rejoice, O man, the Spring is nigh !

“ Turn over Sorrow’s soil, and sow
Unstint of hand and heart, and know
The heritage of flower and song
Is his who waiteth and is strong ! ”

A SOFT MARCH MORNING

MORN of March, like lion roaring,
Look we for thine advent here—
With a wind-paw, strong and mighty,
Making wince and drawing tear.

What has tamed thy fiercesome spirit,
Smoothed the ruffles of thy mane?
Does the Norse God, Odin, hold thee
In a leash beyond thy strain?

Thou must mean to be more kindly :
Mild thine eye as April blue ;
Timid buds are shyly peeping,
Where last year the wild-rose grew ;

In the woods there is a whisper,
And green hints of fragrant bloom,
Bursting through the tangled cover,
And the dead leaves make them room.

Morn of March, the rooks are flying
High amid thy cloudy bars,
Soon the breath of Spring shall banish
Stain and tear of Winter scars.

Bring the west-wind, bring the sunlight,
Herald true of sunny days,
Morn of March, I give thee greeting,
Take this wayside song of praise.

WHISTLING MARCH

WHISTLE, winds of March, and set
Your notes both strong and true ;
Wake up the drowsy violet,
The crocus nods to you !

Whistle, winds of March, for long
Earth's frozen lips were dumb ;
The life-blood quickens with your song,
Through apple-tree and plum !

Whistle, winds of March, and stir
The laggard steps of Spring ;
Pipe your loudest—do not spare—
Till all the woodlands ring !

Till gladness carols with the morn,
And skips like lambs at play,
And blue eggs nestle in the thorn,
A-curtained round with May.

Whistle winds of March, for you
The Herald's voice of cheer ;
Blow forth your message, strong and true,
Make answer all who hear !

APRIL, PITIFUL TO TEARS.

WHEN April, pitiful to tears,
 For hedge and field, by winter whipped—
 Smiles through her gentle sorrows—lipped
 To tender kisses in arrears—
 What wonder flower-eyed beauty opes
 Shy glances down the greening slopes !

Frail, venturesome, and hued of grace
 The Winter never guessed, they seem
 The offspring of a drowsy dream.
 On which the lines of sleep we trace,
 Ere yet the pirate cuckoo calls
 His mate beside the waterfalls.

And once again we greet them, where
 They bloomed in unforgotten Springs ;
 While lighter than the flight of wings
 Come memories on the scented air.
 When April, pitiful to tears
 Bids us forget the waste of years.

APRIL DAISIES

On seeing little McC. picking daisies.

DEAR child, with April in your eyes,
 And morning in your smile,
 Capricious as the April skies
 Your dancing feet beguile :
 As fragrance to the rose, so ye
 Are one with all the day to me.

For you, apparelled as a flower,
 As beautiful and free,
 Ask nothing of the scented hour,
 But to accept its glee—
 As careless as the grass that springs
 About the nest while builder sings.

If fairies haunt no more the earth,
 These fields, with daisies set,
 Could well be cradles of their birth,
 Nor fancy perish yet,
 Where all that dainty sprites might need
 Lies ambushed in each lowly weed.

And if a swift regret clouds o'er
 The joy the moment brings,
 It is that I no more—no more—
 Like everything that sings
 This April day, can ever be
 A child again and sing as free.

APRIL OR MAY?

O SUNNY beam from April skies,
 Where is the Summer hiding?
 Come, show me where the rosebud lies,
 O prithee, be confiding!

Upon the glade a rosy lip
 You press in pure enjoyment,
 All through the purple spinnies skip
 In magical employment.

The golden daffodils aglow,
 Give back your amorous glances,
 And where the silver catkins blow,
 Your revels and your prances

Look very much like fairies out
 On madcap frolic playing:
 I almost hear the festive shout,
 The sweet things you are saying.

O sunny truant, hark, my quest!
 Where are the lilies dressing?
 Where is the sedge's silver crest,
 The wood-dove's low caressing?

And where the blue forget-me-nots—
 The shimmer and the quiver
 About the moorhen's matted cots,
 Adown the sleeping river!

I half believe you know, and yet
 You leave my heart in wonder—
 A wilful, April-eyed coquette,
 That tears Hope's buds asunder.

A FIELD OF BUTTERCUPS

TO-DAY my rambling footsteps strayed
 Where massy elms, and hoary,
 Shook over gold no mint assayed—
 Of unimagined glory :

The mellow myth of Midas seemed
 Before my eyes in splendour ;
 Had he across those meadows dreamed,
 And was his touch so tender ?

Nay ! gold that sharp'neth lust, not there
 Awoke ignoble longing,
 But buttercups beyond compare,
 On daisy-snow a-thronging !

Fit haunt for gentle Mab and train,
 If she by day went roaming ;
 Ah ! me, if fabled things were plain,
 I then had caught them combing

Her silken tresses in the sun,
 Their eyes with mischief sparkling,
 As dream-embroidered veils they spun,
 Before the twilight's darkling.

O, well for me my footsteps found,
 Outside of story olden,
 So fair a spot—like fabled ground,
 Of Attic days, all golden !

Methought I heard the magic strains
 Of Amphion—was it dreaming !
 As back into the shadowed lanes,
 I left those meadows gleaming ?

MAY-BLOOMS

WHEN May-blooms whiten on the thorn
 And coombe and garden gay,
 When thrushes at the gate of morn
 Call to the coming day—
 With love-impassioned lay—
 Then be my lot, in homage—still—
 Of scent and song to take my fill,
 And love's allegiance pay,
 When May-blooms whiten.

When May-blooms whiten, give to me
 Freedom of foot and eye,
 Freedom of fleeting bird and bee,
 Freedom to leap or lie
 With all things bright and nigh.
 There let my heart unburdened sing,
 In happy tryst with everything
 Around and in the sky,
 When May-blooms whiten.

When May-blooms whiten, and my sight
 No more shall greet its snows,
 Nor glad steps wander with delight
 Beside the green hedgerows,
 When Time must needs foreclose.
 Oh, be my lot—apart—again
 In gentle thought to walk the lane,
 And feel the scented wind that blows,
 When May-blooms whiten.

A DAY IN MAY

A DORNED in perfumed gold and green,
 Milky blossoms on the plum,
 Warm as a mother's heart, the air—
 Queen May is come !

The gauzy elm-tops screen the rooks,
 Emerald hedges bridal birds,
 Tuneful twitterings fill the hour,
 Too sweet for words.

The meads are white with flow'ry drift—
 Happy children weave their chains
 Of cowslip bells, and daisy stars,
 With infant pains.

The cuckoo's distant notes distract
 Soft, answering echo, nigh ;
 O song for ever young, though youth
 Must pass and die !

Again ! again ! from fragrant garth,
 It wanders o'er the vale—
 Rare consort for the blue-bell days,
 Ere love shall fail.

O virgin moments, in whose cells
 Joy storeth wealth untold,
 Give me to gather as yon bee,
 Ere days grow cold

And winter blows through leafless age
 My bloomless boughs among,
 The memories of departed youth,
 And cuckoo's song.

A WOODLAND TRYST.

I AND April in the woods,
 Found to-day each other,
 Crocus gold upon her breast,
 Maid of queenly mother ;
 How I worshipped as she tript,
 Dainty limbed, and rosy-lipt.

Round about us zephyrs sang ;
 In my heart the gladness grew
 Till I told with passion'd tongue
 All its longing ever knew :
 Then I knelt beside her, still—
 Of her beauty took my fill !

Chiff-chaff building in the thorn
 Spied us with unfearful eyes ;
 From the sun-bathed hills of morn
 Dropt the lark's fond rhapsodies ;
 Bliss imprisoned, she and I
 Caring naught for liberty.

In her hands she held for me
 Wind-flowers frail, and daisies fair,
 I tremble, lest my touch might be
 Too rude such joyous things to share.
 She wove them with her fingers deft
 In coronal while tryst we kept.

The blue above, the green around,
And careless as the lambs at play—
From every meaner wish unbound,
And white in thought as bloom of May ;
The sweet hours languish'd to the noon,
The joy sands slipped away too soon.

And there on sunny couch we kissed,
And all the air was like a rose :
No glance unheeded, or unmissed,
Unmindful of life's sterner pose,
The moment in itself the key
To love's divinest ecstasy.

SUMMER

JUNE

O JUNE, the poets sang thy praise,
 In jocund verse, ere I was born :
 From far-flown, ancient yesterdays,
 Their music beats from morn to morn ;
 And men shall sing, and men shall pass,
 As flowers of field—as with'ring grass,
 And leave thee yet unsung,
 O June, whose beauty is unworn—
 Whose heart is ever young !

Had I the liquid notes of bird
 The secret of thy simple rose,
 The melodies by moonlight stirr'd,
 When deep woods tremble in repose,
 How should I compass thy desert,
 O month with loveliness begirt,
 Divinest of the year ?
 O June, whose fragrant bounty throws
 Our heart's celestial cheer !

Were mine the buoyancy of wing,
 To bear me whither I would soar,
 The freedom of each fluttering thing
 That revels on thy flow'ry floor,
 My gladness would not be content—
 My rapture spilled, would be unspent,
 Thy sweet delights unsung—
 O June, to paradise the door,
 Whose heart is ever young !

UNDER A JUNE SKY

O WONDROUS arc of blue and white,
 Wherein the lark, far out of sight,
 Pours forth its song,
 Thy pure untrodden aisles of light,
 Unbend my Fancy for a flight
 Thy spheres among ;

For I am restless with the strife,
 The warfare and the grief of life,
 Its cold and frost :
 The wish for conquest never won,
 The weary heart at set of sun,
 The ideal lost !

The scented breath of June but stirs
 The top-plumes of the solemn firs
 That throw their shade
 Upon the daisy-dappled green,
 To form for me a pleasant screen
 In sunny glade.

Here I can watch the cloudy isles
 Dilating in the morning smiles,
 Swift happening :
 Up through the pearly spaces soar,
 Traverse each orient sea and shore,
 And soaring, sing :

Forgetful of Earth's tares and tears—
Self-generated cares and fears,
 That so molest
The spirit seeking for its goal,
The ripening promise of the soul,
 The heart's best rest.

O lucent heights of cloud and air,
Did we more frequent climb thy stair
 Above life's fret,
Each moment might be sacrifice,
Each duty of the day suffice—
 An altar set.

MIDSUMMER EVE.

THROUGH the iris-bannered marshes the mill
stream finds the sea.
With pools of twilight, sleeping, 'neath the
rushes' panoply;
With tripping, silvery laughter it winds its
course along,
With the sun-kiss on its bosom, and on its lips
a song!
The stately foxgloves glimmer above its gleam-
ing tide,
And the slender reeds bow lowly beneath their
purple pride,
And o'er the Sea's strong labour Time never
shall reprieve
The wordless, swooning sweetness of a mid-
summer's eve.

No white-winged gull is dipping about the
glowing bar,
Low as a cradle lullaby comes the sea-rune
from afar.
And if some later Romeo his Juliet woos, 'tis
where
The dumb rocks hide the secret their cold
hearts cannot share.
The winds, unshod, are lighter than the sigh
of lovers' lips,
And o'er the drowsy ocean seem asleep the
misty ships.
Soundless, and softly radiant, the setting day
shall leave
No shadow of a sorrow on this midsummer's
eve.

Flow, flow, dear brook that singest! it may
 be yonder sphere,
Bending in pearl above me, hath many a
 listening ear!
It may be—who shall tell us?—the spell it
 lays on me,
Still has its fair remembrance in that eternity!
And joys, wrought out of beauty as brief as
 this rare hour,
Blow there in undecaying, and June appa-
 relled flower.
So, Memory, hide the dream the magic
 moments weave—
The wordless, swooning sweetness of the mid-
 summer's eve.

A SUMMER BEATITUDE

O WOULD that I had art to counterfeit
 In some rare image all this morn's suggest,
 Some poet-figure flamed with glory meet,
 To paint this summer paradise the gods have
 drest !

Sweet fancies fill my brain,
 The heart's clear music springs,
 But languishes to pain,
 And silences the strings.

In vain I crave, and vainer still desire,
 So impotent before this flooding joy,
 Warmed into ardours by empyreal fire,
 So wond'rous near, and yet so wond'rous coy ;
 I am as one who sips
 Some elfish cup—to find
 It shattered from my lips,
 And waste the draught enshrined.

Let me be still—unwishful—better boon—
 Since leafy lilt, and quivering note of bird,
 That reaches all my soul this day of June,
 Eludes my little craft and lifeless word ;
 Let me be still to guard
 The charm unutterable,
 Nor any sense retard
 Of the wild woodland spell.

Why should I sing—made emulous by thrush?

Why foolish flaunt my hueless flowers of speech

In mimic adulation when each bush,

Each flowery-burnished bank, hath that to teach?

We know not, neither dream,

Barred by the flaming gate,

Brighter than noon's high beam

Of some diviner state?

I would be comforted—lose yoke and strain,

Forget—and, in forgetting, open wide

A purer eye upon the world again,

And read "the weed's plain secret" at my side;

Too much ourselves, we miss

The gifts the gods do bring

On such a morn as this,

When earth and heaven sing!

MIDSUMMER NOON

THE windless trees are lazy,
All slumb'rous in the heat ;
The air is full of sunshine,
The fields are full of wheat.

The zenith, like Narcissus,
Peeps into drowsy pools—
Blue eyes throw back a greeting
Below the teazel spools.

The dragon-fly is napping
On lily islands cool,
The butterfly is folded
Like Puck upon a stool.

The sheep are in the shadow,
The cows are half asleep,
Knee-deep in juicy rushes,
Where moorhens idly cheep.

The hay-fields are a-shimmer,
The brawny swains adrowse ;
The lads coo to the lasses
Of when they'll wed, and house.

The day is full of gladness—
Of all things pure and sweet ;
The air is full of sunshine,
The fields are full of wheat.

SUMMER SONG

I KNEW not I was winter-bound
And under songless skies,
And through the songless landscape walked,
With drooping sunless eyes ;
But when the summer came, my sweet,
Soft presenced in thy glance,
The snowdrifts slipped away—and lo !
I woke me from my trance !

I know not whither winter fled,
Nor care, for thou art near !
Sweet is the violet-haunted bank,
But thou art sweeter, dear ;
I knew not I was winter-bound :
I know the summer's come !
I know the world is full of song,
Where all the world was dumb.

THE POET'S SUMMER

UPON a bank where mallows spread
 Their gloss to glossy stream,
Where every living thing was wed
 To smiles as gleam to gleam :

There, on a day of blue there came
 A poet in whose heart
Dwelt, shrined as some beloved name—
 A thought—a dream—apart.

He watched the river flash and flow,
 Through meadow green and gay,
He watched the shadows come and go,
 The swallow skim and play :

He caught the burthen of the breeze,
 And tuned his ears anew ;
He learned the love-tales of the trees,
 Of weed that near him grew :

He knew the wind-weft on the lake,
 The mill-wheel's frothy yeast,
The frightened moorhen's glittering wake,
 The lap of watering beast :

The ring of whetting scythe, the scent
 Of new-mown grass and hay,
The wandering soul of bell and bent
 Abroad that Summer's day ;

He watched the wild-rose lure the bee,
 The honeysuckle climb,
And net its odorous canopy
 Above the banks of thyme :

And bursting into song, his Thought—
 As children cull a flower—
 Took up the spell the moment brought,
 The birthgift of the hour.

“O Seeker, searching unto tears,
 To-morrow's bourne, and bay,
 Call in thy vision, ope thy ears
 To hear God's voice to-day.

“The tortured roots of hungry haste,
 Exposed by ruthless toil,
 By feverish fingers torn, displaced,
 Crave for their mother soil ;

“Unflowering promise crieth, hid :
 ‘O give me life and light !
 Let morning touch my languid lid,
 Evoke my sleeping might !’

“The heart's unrest for ever ploughs
 Its Eden-flowers to death,
 Untimely blights the blossomed boughs
 With discontented breath ;

“Self forges swords of banishment
 From gardens of delight,
 Unsuns the glowing firmament,
 Unmoons the healing night !

“Slaves to the Nero of Desire,
 We make our senses spies,
 Command them forth in fateful ire
 To watch with lustful eyes :

“Whip into spume God's gentle calm,
 Iconoclasts of peace,
 Who valley roods bescorn, to farm
 The rocks of cold caprice.

“ O Searcher, searching unto tears,
 To-morrow's bourne and bay,
 Call in thy vision, nigh are seers,
 Take thou sweet holiday.

“ Bid home thy senses from the plains:
 Arcady as of yore,
 If shepherded by simple swains,
 Unversed in musty lore,

“ Hath sages who with gentle art
 Read well the flow'ry page
 Of Nature's book, and can impart
 Its wisdom to the age.

—

The drowsy hum of dragon flies,
 O'er quivering iris sheen,
 The flash of burnished insect dyes
 About their scabbards green:

The choiring flight of migrant birds,
 Broke on the Poet's song,
 Soft melodies more sweet than words
 Of Love's impassioned tongue,

Made conquest of the Quiet—filled
 The moment as with wine,
 Till worship worshipped, hushed and thrilled,
 And Thought was half divine!

Below the ranks of bullioned gorse,
 He watched the river swim,
 Till whiter than the Southern Cross,
 Its lust'rous, shining brim,

Bent round by orchard-hidden farms,
 Past roofs of rural ease,
 Sung softly by quaint garden arms,
 And hives of thriving bees;

In hemlock snows, staid, knee-deep, stood
 Sleek-sided kine, content,
 Some laving in the purling flood,
 'Neath wind-fanned willow tent;

The lang'rous music of the breeze,
 Like Beauty's dreaming sigh,
 A-sleeping in its fragrant ease,
 Scarce shook the dove's low cry:

And, mingling with its orisons,
 The bugling gnats, and bees,
 With wingless, working garrisons
 Of ants blent harmonies;

Soft pæans, Lydian-voiced, and sweet
 With lily breath, and rose,
 Such as no quills of ancient feat
 Soothed Delphic maiden's woes.

The measured dip of pleased oar—
 The liquid laugh of Love—
 The slumb'rous tides of Avon bore
 Past haunts of merle and dove;

Warm, truant raptures, freedom stung,
 In eddyng echoes tossed,
 Like trembling bells by wind-waves rung—
 A moment heard, and lost!

Then, as those haunting sounds of song
 Broke on the main of morn,
 The Poet's answering spirit—strong—
 As one to Hope re-born,

Once more took up his silent quill :
 "O, Searcher unto rest,
 Cool banks invite thy hot-heeled will,
 Forego thy footsore quest.

"The seedling wayside weed that springs
 To die upon the waste,
 The rude worm's burrowed, loamy rings,
 Rebuke thy wilful haste ;

"Swart spheres invoke world-leisured eyes,
 The craft of Love to find
 Behind the moment's masked disguise
 Where paths untrodden wind ;

"Adown calm, ivoried skies, the eve
 Trips, clothed in rare array,
 While Ariel-fingered genii weave
 The couch of drowsing day ;

"Transfigured beauty blossoms space,
 As May the barren thorn,
 The hour is robed with royal grace,
 As Autumn vales with corn :

"No Sappho-perfumed-phrase could speak
 The silences that fold
 Softly about the soul as peak
 Of snow puts on its gold :

"Great issuings of wordless speech,
 A comradeship of mood,
 When man and moment, each to each
 Convoys a stainless good :

"Dear confidences that but crave
 Purged hearing from the rout
 Of herding tumults—the mad rave
 Of Passion's ribald shout :

“ Warm, gentle friendliness of flower,
 And air, and tinted leaf,
 The lilt of sunset’s rainbowed shower—
 Tears of the hour’s brief grief.

“ O Searcher, searching pomp and pelf,
 Impatient, burden-bent,
 Can’st thou not get outside thyself—
 Outside the low-roofed tent

“ Of soulless sense whose atmosphere,
 With semblances is thick,
 To cast a far-look—cleansed and clear,
 Beyond thy bawble pick?

“ We see not all the moment means,
 Our dross-filled eyes unnote
 The rhythmic clasp of leafy sheens
 Around the forest’s throat:

“ Our ears unheed the throstle’s song,
 The lullaby of June,—
 Bedulled by Mammon’s mammoth gong
 And Lust’s derisive croon.

“ O Searcher, seeking through the vain
 Of mocking years—unhealed—
 The Mother Healer soothes thy pain
 With medicine of field;

“ With touch that stills the fevered mind,
 With draught as sweet as breath
 That blossoms on the western wind,
 When Spring dawn issueth;

“ Lave thou in founts of ether—breast
 In nakedness of will,
 The circling wave whose crystal crest
 Sings round God’s morning hill;

“Surrendered to the spell that spins
Through each revolving hour,
Forget the world's untempered dins—
Take thou the gracious dower:

“These, Servitors of God who wait
The challenge of the heart,
Who guard the best of life—the gate
To Love's divinest mart.

“Seek thou not further gifts,—behold
The flower of Joy is nigh,
Unbought of Cæsar's shining gold,
Unseen of Cæsar's eye.”

IN BONDAGE

THE red-heart of the rose to me discloses
A dream far hid, like some unopened bud,
And o'er the Summer feeling, as a flood—
Dealing swift ruin to its tender posies—
Drives the black rain of memory's icy scud!

What if with pansy eyes, June heeds my grieving,
And flowers again the spray with sweet beguile?
No bloom can bring me more the vanished smile!
Nay, unto me, the Summer's glad achieving
Is labour unrewarded, vain of wit and wile.

O red-rose thought, that blooms for aye, undying,
Climbing the crannied walls of Love's regret,
June with a thousand counterfeits is set
To while away the pain of fruitless sighing,
But never one to make the heart forget.

LENGTHENING DAYS

AH! who shall tell what sweet enchantment works
 Within this lovely hour of gentle eve—
Scarce eve as yet, for in its magic lurks
 Dream-colour dewy morn might only weave?

The lusty winds have lulled, and from the sky
 The cloudy flocks are gathered to the fold,
A violet-golden glory fills the eye,
 And for a while harsh Winter dares not scold.

Delight, re-vestured, lifts its early bloom,
 Flowering the fields of feeling—long time dead,
The heart finds songs unsung, though shadows loom,
 And hope, by frosty airs, is buffeted!

So come the lengthening days upon our dearth,
 Luring us forth with bird and bud, to be
Sharers of all the new-born cheer of earth,
 Lords of the air, the sun, and tumbling sea!

AUTUMN

A SEPTEMBER GLOAMING

GOLDEN corn and tawny sky,
 About me, rustling, menace, sigh,
 As the moody winds drift by,
 And the day droops down to die.

Golden corn and purple hills,
 Over-hung with cloudy frills—
 Vapour-sails the sunset fills
 With light and beauty as it wills.

Tawny corn and ghostly sky,
 Whither, Beauty, dost thou fly?
 Hast thou secret hiding nigh
 To the quest of longing eye?

Ghostly corn with shadows spanned :
 Murmurings mystic as the strand
 Where waters break on Naiad's sand,
 Let me love and understand :
 Ere stars are born,
 Beyond the corn,
 I dream the dreams of wonderland.

AUTUMN LEAVES

FALL, golden leaves of Autumn, fall,
 Ye stir my heart to sing!
 Though Summer flowers are dead below
 The frosty winds that wail and blow,
 Sweet recollections leap and spring
 With your fair fall.

Fall, golden leaves of Autumn, fall!
 Bear secrets to the dust—
 Secrets the Summer suns but knew,
 And moons that pearl'd the tearful dew:
 Full many a transient trust
 Goes with your fall.

Fall, golden leaves of Autumn, fall,
 Make room for growths to be;
 The forest branches moan, and yet
 The moons of coming eves shall set
 And rise above a stauncher tree,
 For this your fall.

Fall, golden leaves of Autumn, fall,
 Ye stir my heart to lift
 The wider vision of the soul;
*We hold not in the leaf the whole,
 Beyond us still the larger gift,
 Though leaves may fall.*

CLOUDS OF AUTUMN

THE August sun is beating into burnish'd gold
The waving fields of grain that well enfold
My leisured nook with circlet rare,
While every sense within the perfumed air
Finds, like the bee, unravished honey cells
Of joy's sweet nectar in myriad hidden wells.
For me, these cloudy domes, and ether deeps
Of orient pearl where Autumn sunlight sleeps
Embalmed, move on my spirit as of eld
God moved upon the waters; my being held
In wonder, poised, like airy battlements,
The briefest hour above earth's discontents.
No features humanise these wind-blown shapes,
Dappling the azure sea with snow-fleck'd capes—
With towers, and minarets, like citadels
Of Magi where unveiled Beauty dwells;
No fabled god had ever throne so fair
As these pavilion splendours carved of air,
Ethereal art through all the seasons free
To hearts that love and mortal eyes that see.
How poor the arts of Time ; how meagre, cold,
Their richest dyes beside these glories rolled
Across the skies in such profusive grace—
Beyond the power of man to grasp or trace!
Shores of the Infinite where viewless tides
Incessant ebb and flow, and mystery hides
Below the unsleeping stars through wasting time,
Perhaps to be no more in some unclouded clime.
On such a day my nature leaps to find
So near the secrets of the Eternal Mind,
With cloud and light my purged vision sees
The rounded orb of Heaven's divine decrees.

SONG OF THE SICKLE

SHEAFs against the windy sky,
 Hungry birds that thief and fly
 Harvest valleys yellow ;
 Cleaving wings, and sickle swings,
 In my heart a thousand strings,
 Swept to music mellow.

Ruddy lips of ripeness press
 Others in a sweet excess,
 Stirring me to covet.
 Ravished meed of tiny weed,
 Prisoned by a golden reed,
 Poppy plumes above it.

Jocund uplands toss and laugh,
 Bound their throats with russet scarf,
 And bands of green begirt ;
 Purple sheen of thistles lean,
 Scabious blossoms, blue, between,
 Upon their bosoms pert.

Bended backs, and brawny hands,
 Gleam among the valley lands—
 Goodly sight, and cheery ;
 Swallows fly the southern sky,
 Falleth soon the leaf to die,
 When the year is weary.

WINTER

BEFORE THE WINTER GATES

THE snowy scarf that folded up the morn in
 gray,
 And hung about the sunless hills and plains
 in mist,
 Is now unloosened by the kindly sun. The
 afternoon is mild
 And garmented in light. Along the level
 meadows—
 Where winds, in many a tortuous line, the
 brook,
 It plays, in step with elfish shadows sinister;
 Above, the cloud-wrack drives before the breeze,
 and sunny bars
 Make stairways down to earth—and in the vale
 The sun-shot vapour shines like sheen of silver
 sea.
 But as I watch, the cold mists thicken; the icy
 sleet
 In eddying current whirls, and wails; a moment
 more
 And visions tender as the dawn are blurred and
 lost!
 Stung to the heart, the stern woods wake and
 weep,
 Like surfeited sob—their embrown'd brows,
 abent

And blanched, while fiercer leaps the gale
Behind the drifting snows, and gathering
 strength
And voice, in deep, majestic and sonorous song
Blows forth its passion o'er the melancholy
 scene!
So grows the night — the long, cold cheerless
 night
Of Winter stupor, when landmarks dumbly
 die,
And dawn uplifts its sullen eye upon
A white-wan wilderness of leagueless snow.

THRENODY

WITH a face set white, in the moonless night,
 The fields lay stark, snow-bounded,
 And down from the cloudy ice-numb'd height,
 Like gnomes all bedight,
 All palsied with fright,
 Fell drizzly flakes by the mad winds hounded.

Winds fearsome as wolves, with their fangs for fight—
 Rampant, remorseless, shrieking,
 Blasting like fire through the terrible night—
 O'er the desolate white—
 Unscanned by the sight,
 Their merciless vengeance swift wreaking?

Down, down, in my heart, the far-buried past,
 Lay stiffen'd, starless, woe-bounded,
 And memory, lashed by the breath of the blast,
 While the flakes fell fast,
 The bygone recast,
 And every note of its sorrow resounded.

Up, up, from the valley of Youth, long dead,
 The sound of voices unnumbered.
 Like the wail of the winds in the trees overhead,
 Like the sigh of the leaves as they fall to their dead,
 Through the desolate night,
 O'er the field-way of white,
 They hail'd me as souls that had slumbered.

A NOVEMBER SKETCH

A TAWNY upland ridge—wind shrived—
 A belt of blackening firs—
 A whirling, gusty pack of clouds,
 Through which the sunset flares—
 Bedraggled, torn—
 Wild, wet, forlorn,
 And riotous with roystering airs.

The leaf-lined slopes a moment burn—
 A smouldering, sullen, glow,
 Below the purpling, pallid aisles
 That swift to phantoms grow;
 Strong, ghastly chills
 Blow from the hills,
 And all the valley takes on woe.

Broad-breasted, like a legion'd host,
 The dusky ghouls of night
 Fling forth their sooty banners—at
 The straggling scouts of light
 The red leaf falls,
 The white owl calls:
 Tu whit—tu whoo, in ghostly flight!

A SNOWSTORM AND GALE

SNOW! sang the gale from its lusty throat,
 Sharp as its stinging hail ;
 Swift o'er the cloud-bergs, near, and remote,
 The face of the sky grew pale ;
 In the teeth of the wind, like a hunted hind,
 Fled the weakling sun,
 While the white-flakes spun
 In a whirling drift behind !

Earth! laughed the snow, as the ghostly host
 Tumbled and tossed in glee,
 Buried the hamlet, pillar, and post,
 Padded each shivering tree ;
 In the teeth of the wind, till the day was blind,
 Faltered in step, and died ;
 And the landscape wide
 At bay, with the drift behind !

* * * * *

Flashed red through the orchard the eye of the gloaming,
 Malignant, menaceful, fierce, rampant, and surly ;
 Across its black forehead, like hordes to their homing,
 Swept over and under the night-runners burly—
 Splintered and broken,
 Their passion unspoken,
 Snow-laden, and soaken,
 Like ghoul-driven furies in frenzy a-roaming ;
 Deep weltered in passion,
 O'er the lowlands all ashen
 Swooped the night in its might, might awful in gloom,
 The white drifts to ermine its blanched, stricken tomb.

NIGHTFALL

FIERCELY all day the wind has raged,
And still unspent
It roars like angry lions caged,
In discontent.

The night swoops down on pinions dark
And chill, with rain :
The storm-vexed woodlands, pinch'd and stark,
Moan in their pain ;

For like marauding spirits, bent
On evil deed,
Unleashed from gusty firmament,
With vengeful speed

The savage ice-blasts scourge the main
In hoarse delight,
And ruddy rifts of dead leaves stain
Their way of might !

How sway the trees, and crack, and strain
The ravish'd boughs !
No more adown the Autumn lane
Will beauty drowse :

November, like a giant strong,
Must gather all ;
And leave to me the Winter, long,
And windy brawl.

Yet if of Summer joys bereft,
And Autumn dyes,
Keen are the pleasures that are left
'Neath wintry skies.

A WILD NIGHT

SEE now, through wraiths of wet and woeful wrack
Of hounded cloud, the dim December moon !
In tearful plight,
With weird, fantastic hordes that crowd and hack
Her peri beauty, till she well nigh swoon
From sight !

While tameless winds, unleash'd, leap wild and wroth,
And havoc heave among each shuddering shroud,
Agaunt and pale :
Caught in the bellowing breath of ice-lipt North.
Whetting his coultter keen in fury loud,
And hale !

O moon of month mist-muffled to the throat,
Sore vex'd with vengeful airs and ariel moan,
Thy robes arent ;
And o'er thy tearful beams the Stygian mote :
Through wasting years thou art, in beauty lone,
Unspent !

ALONE WITH NATURE

A SANCTUARY

To thee, O woods, I bring a breath
 Corruptible, and brief, and spent—
 The breath of Life whose eager vent
 Speeds ever onward, courting death :—
 To thee, O woods, whose leaf-lips blow
 The incorrupt, I come, with heart and hope aglow !

Rare odours thine for nostrils sick
 With reek and riot of the earth—
 Its heat and shams—its crowded berth,
 Its clotted atmospheres—sweat-laden, thick
 With awful toil, and cares that lift
 Unanswered eyes of pain across its sunless drift.

Omnipotent and vast and strong,
 Cool as the dew night softly drops,
 When softer moons thy piny tops
 Bathe in eternal calm and soundless song,
 The message of thy lips is strength :
 Possessed by thee, I, too, possess height, breadth, and
 length !

Each duct of drought-dried consciousness
 Sucks in the brimming draught of life ;
 In wild, full overflow—arife
 With tossing, glad imperiousness,
 The joy-tide rolls to slake the sense,
 With undefiled, and undefiling recompense.

Thy silent solitudes of shade
Inspire no terror, wake no dread :
Thy giant sinews, centuries fed—
Green-summer nourish'd, and by winter frayed ;
No menace in their mighty girths
Unbare to him who walks among their bosky births.

I talk with seers, and prophets, versed
In lore unwrit in tomes of Time :
Sweet songs unsung, chords from a clime
Unblistered by the wrongs that make this cursed
Flow to my ears, unmeasured, free,
And all the great woods know, in love they give to me.

LATE AUTUMN WOODS

Bedvean Woods, North Wales

SILENCE has laid her slumber spell
 On you to-day;
 So sweet it is I cannot tell
 My heart it breathes decay:
 Why should I? Hush, my sorrow, too,
 And cradle me in dreams with you!

For so it seems to me, you dream
 On pillowed gold!
 Hugging the sun-lit summer's gleam
 In strong enfold,
 Heedless of autumn's last caress
 In visions of past happiness.

A thousand unforgotten things
 Yet linger here!
 The rustling harmonies of wings—
 Bird-pipings clear—
 Dove-calls, and twilight serenades;
 The wonder of nocturnal glades.

Now, tired, you sleep; Sleep on, dear woods!
 Break not the spell
 That over all your beauty broods
 So passionately well;
 The winds shall winnow all too soon
 And leave you naked to the moon!

AN UPLAND VISION

FROM one grey upland-ridge, wind-shorn,
 And still—with all the dead romance
 Of Autumn round me, tossed and torn;
 Struck down in chill unwaking trance—
 I watched the troubled host of cloud,
 In dark battalions, spread abroad
 Rain-gloom'd, as if with sorrow bowed
 For valleys given to the sword!

Across the devious-outlined hills,
 The sullen musk of mist lay deep;
 Cold, phantom fingers, weaving frills
 For summer's loveliness asleep;
 I watched them fashion into shape
 The solemn tapestries of woe,
 O'er songless wood, and mountain cape
 Like exhalations of the snow!

Far outward toward Plinlimmon's crest,
 I shared the passing of the day;
 The darkly-moving, weird unrest,
 The gleaming lights, like fays at play;
 Till, fairer-hued those flowers that ope
 Their matchless secrets to the spring,
 Rolled down o'er vale and craggy slope
 A glory overmastering!

Crowning each frowning glen and pass—
 Each rampart of Llewelyn's pride—
 The tawny woods, and spangled grass,
 The blacken'd gorge sepulchral-eyed
 In splendour, surely fabled dyes
 Of kingdoms nurtured of the sun,
 Could not outvie in rare surprise,
 So exquisite, so finely spun!

O moments magical with change—
 With silence, loss, and calm content;
 With awe that shaded mountain range,
 And gilded autumn's gold, nigh spent,
 If we must mourn decay and death,
 A sweetness softens pang and pain,
 When every fleeting, floating breath
 Bids us take heart and hope again!

Fade, fade the flowers—the root remains;
 Each day brings ransoms of its own;
 Adown the deluged track of rains.
 The songs of coming springs are blown;
 And ever from life's upland height,
 At dawn or sunset, we shall find
 The shining of the gods that light
 The feet from valleys left behind!

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF A FAVOURITE NOOK

UNHEEDING hand, unsparing knife—
 What havoc thine!
 Fiercer than edge of wintry strife,
 Cutting the very roots of life!
 What sorrow mine!

Full many a minstrel, fledged of Spring,
 Was cradled here:
 Taught how to forage and to sing,
 And bear itself on venturous wing,
 To me how dear!

Bee-haunted blossoms, shyly sweet,
 Looked out for me,
 And many a weedy heart could cheat
 The baffling thought from black defeat
 Reprovingly.

What love each sunny leaf would tell
 To him, whose ear
 Bent low beside the simple spell
 Learned lowly lessons—learning well—
 With heart sincere!

And if with dreamer's heart I took
 A simple fare,
 This bank above the laughing brook
 Was salutation, psalm, or book,
 And blessing rare!

So wonder not I mourn, and shed
 A poet's tear,
 For ruthless deed, and promise dead,
 And weep regret, uncomforted
 Beside its bier.

UNDER GARN MADRYN

(An Evening Reverie)

UPON Garn Madryn's lonely height—
 Lord of the fertile vale—
 The pillowed mists, in vesture light,
 Lie shadowy and pale.

The summer twilight's tender spell
 Broods on its woody breasts,
 And here and there the sun's farewell
 In rosy blushes rests ;

Long ling'ring, as a lover might,
 On wheaten roods of gold,
 On pastures fading on the sight,
 Inclosing night's enfold !

Methinks the blue Unganean shades
 Of Petrarch's deathless song,
 Might be twin-mated with these glades,
 And Laura feel no wrong !

Abode of all quick Fancy loves
 Of lore, and legend wild,
 And musical with cooing doves,
 And hymn of moorland child.

And if through all the hallowed hush
 That folds me as a dream,
 I hear the Cymric passion rush,
 Impetuous as a stream

Full-throated by the winter rains,
 And thirsty for the sea,
 Did Petrarch of the Tuscan plains
 Know purer ecstasy ?

The strength of all the hills is mine—
 Each silent tor and llyn,
 And every hoary bardic shrine,
 Where blow the heath and whin,

Throws wide sweet sheltering solitudes
 To me, whose spirit hears,
 Behind Time's blank desuetudes,
 The message of the years.

Avenging, not with sword, but song,
 The bastard hordes of Fate,
 Whose cynic harpies gibe and throng,
 In Doubt articulate.

So from those dim retreats of old,
 To me this summer's night,
 No beggar's mite is coldly doled,
 But Hope and conquering Might!

BODVEAN WOODS, NORTH WALES

(On hearing the First Cuckoo and Woodpigeons)

DEAR notes, the clangour of the years
 May dull the ear's first virgin sense,
 And things appear less wonderful,
 Than in the bud of innocence.
 Yet never fails thy spell to bring
 A joy as deep and nourishing !

And here, on mountain boulder, pressed
 By all the living mirth of May,
 Below—the valley's fair expanse—
 Soft, greening slopes, apparelled gay—
 My inner vision marks not less
 A far-home's tender loveliness ;

Where through the scented meadows flowed
 The lilled stream in simple guise,
 Marged by the willows' silver sheen,
 That dropped their lashes o'er its eyes,
 And runed with rippling lip, to rush,
 What all the wind said, and the thrush !

The straggling copse—the sluices drip—
 Secluded haunt of moony owls—
 The grave, ancestral elms and ash,
 The marsh-bed of the water-fowls ;
 These, as thy notes come ringing clear,
 Seem not afar, but warm and near !

Sweet thoughts that throng, sweet notes
 that bring
 A wordless pleasure to the mind,
 While such enchantments touch the heart,
 Delight new feasts may ever find,
 Nor yet unmoved by present scenes
 Find wealth in what the memory gleans !

THE RIVALS

(North Wales)

THE giant keepers of the Hills no more
 These solitudes invade,
 Yet to a modern's ear, the storied lore
 Of vale and glade,
 Lives all around, and lends a charm supreme
 To those rude ways—and to the poet's dream.

For here, where healthy verdure robes the steep
 In regal panoply,
 And low, melodious murmurs softly creep
 To find the sea—
 The freedom of the mountain sons of yore,
 Floods thought and heart, as surges do the shore!

Methinks each fastness—each secluded glen,
 Repeats in echoes loud,
 The voice and valour of stern fighting men—
 Of prowess proud—
 Disdaining aught but deed for clan and kin,
 And love of hearth and home, of stone and linn.

The flush of fray and forage dyed these glooms
 In crimson-tinctured stain;
 Where crop the shaggy sheep amid their blooms,
 Blood ran like rain;
 Louder than torrent's tumult surged the strife,
 Where long-sown dead sleep 'neath this purple life!

What say the winds among the tufted bells?
 What secrets has the Sea?
 From storm-brazed trench, and weather-beaten cells,
 A grim antiquity
 Sends forth its ghostly shadows, and I dream,
 Answer the call to arms, so real they seem.

It is a dream ! The shepherd's shout afar
 My musing mood molests ;
Dark grows the hilly crescent, with a star
 Above its breasts !
It is a dream ! The lapping waves below
My moment's foothold, answer, weird and low.

Cold, brooding mists swoop o'er the inky cars,
 The stilly hollows hide
The dewy shadows sleeping on the tarns,
 And high and wide
The moorland silence, and the misty sea,
Give of their strength, and lend me company.

SNOWDON

*(As seen from the Roman Bridge, Dolwyddellan,
on an April evening)*

THOU vast, remote, waste wilderness of stone !
A peachy-purple mass among the hills,
Whose lesser heights, with less ambitious wills,
Have left thee monarch—stern, aloof, alone !
First kissed of dawn—with misty banners strown
About thy shoulders when the tempests beat
Their thunders out, and mad spates wash thy feet :—
Majestic, silent—save for windy secrets blown
Into thy bleak, black tarns, and buried there
For aye ; what myst'ry and power are thine ! how stir
Strange fancies in thy presence whose years of change
Have brushed thy changeless brow as doth the air,
And left thee so much more the mightier,
Great granite god of Cambria's solemn range.

A WELSH SPATE AT NIGHT

THE lids of the morning drooped, but noon
 Its sorrow knew, and wept ;
 And when at night the venturous moon
 Through black clouds, wan-faced, crept,
 The mad spate swept
 Through gorge and cleft,
 White-tongued, and torn with striving haste,
 A thunderous, deafening, watery waste !

Hark ! how it rips the inky night,
 In zigzag, frothy, fearsome might !
 Down, down, it pours,
 And shrieks, and roars
 In reckless, hissing spite !

And up from its weltering haunts, its song
 Chaunts through the hours of sleep ;
 I listen, and fancy a grim, gaunt throng
 Of ghouls their orgies keep ;
 And the pale moon dies
 In the moist dawn-skies,
 But to wearied ears, and sleepless eyes,
 Still, tortured, and strong, in the face of day,
 It shouts its defiance, and dashes away !

A WELSH MOUNTAIN STREAM

OVER sunny shingle reaches
 Silver gray,
 Over dusky golden shallows,
 Cool all day :
 In merry tones, like laughter,
 It babbles, ever after
 Its love, the deep, great river,
 Where the tender moon-shafts quiver,
 Like fairies out at play.

By many a cowslip coppice,
 Full of song,
 Where birds in leafy coverts pipe
 Loud and long :
 In sunny day and showery,
 Through meadows green and flowery,
 Its ripples gleam and glitter,
 And mock the linnet's twitter,
 In never-ceasing song.

When Spring puts forth her blossoms
 Like a bride,
 And pink-white banners glisten
 O'er its tide :
 In Summer's fuller splendour,
 In Autumn dim and tender,
 And Winter, cold and hoary,
 I've listened to its story,
 And wandered by its side.

For my merry water mavis,
 Secret knows!
And I wait to hear it whisper'd,
 As it flows,
In merry tones, like laughter,
And babbles, ever after
Its love, the deep, great river,
When the tender moon-shafts quiver,
 Like fairies out at play.

NIGHTFALL IN THE LLEDR VALLEY

WHILE night, athirst, drinks up the day,
And drains the golden goblet dry,
And low winds through the fir-woods sigh,
Among the moss-grown wilds I stray :

My footfall noiseless as the tread
Of feline night the landscape o'er;
And, save the Lledr's tuneful roar
Belów me through its dusky bed ;

Or startled bleat of drowsing sheep,
The silence unmolested broods
On moorland wide, and valley woods,
On ravine rift, and craggy steep.

Now, in its awful strength, the gloom
Enwraps each purple ridge and fort ;
Each truant patch of colour caught
Gives up the ghost before its doom.

But through the fragrant darkness slips
The voiceful murmur of the stream,
Unhushed in shadow or in gleam,
In seaward song with sealless lips ;

I check my footsteps, but the song
The hidden river sings shall stay—
A memory when life's waning day
Shall troop its raven shades along.

BIRDINGBURY

(On seeing the name pencilled on a fly-leaf of an old book)

DEAR spot! Remembrance holds thee yet
 So warm and close, thy pencilled name,
 Floods all my thought, desire, and aim,
 As with a rain of wild regret;
 I should but give my love to shame,
 Could I forget.

Since when I left thy meadows, set
 So softly round thy willowed Leam—
 And coppiced haunts, where in a dream
 I left awhile Life's tare and tret,
 Myself now changed—thy wood and stream
 Could I forget!

But thou art far, the sea-deep's fret,
 Rolls upward through the troubled night,
 And scorneth it with hateful spite,
 To mock me that my eyes are wet
 With visions of a lost delight,
 Could I forget!

A NORFOLK NOTE

I WATCHED the sunset, brief,
 On ashen altars flare,
 Fling over dripping leaf,
 And through the sullen air,

A vesture as of fire,
 That burnt, but unconsumed
 The fallow-flats, the spire,
 In blurring branches tombed ;

The sluggish dykes gleamed gold ;
 The reedy lances red ;
 Crimson the beechen mould,
 As if for grief it bled.

'Twas passed ! The night, unfed,
 In hunger prowled apace ;
 The timid daylight fled
 And swooned below the chace ;

All motionless, the mills
 Stood ghost-like, sail to sail ;
 Under star-beacon'd hills
 The wild ducks picked their trail ;

In mist, gray Ely reared
 Above the flooded main ;
 The blackwings disappeared,
 More solemn grew the plain ;

The dark, damp, oozy fen,
 Whose brackish waters kept
 Its secret things from men,
 And winter-wasted, slept.

EDGE HILL WOODS

(Revisited)

DEAR Woods, the footway of the years,
 Like your sweet windings, tell
 Of stress, and storm, of light and tears,
 And dirge of wint'ry knell,
 Since I your aisles of beauty sought
 To tread, leaf-wrapt, in musing thought.

Yet change, than season's fleeter, leaves
 Me still a mem'ry green,
 And over all the bygone weaves
 A tender, veiling sheen,
 Where pain is lost, and joy alone
 Sings true above the winter moan.

Ah, me! the spring flowers burst and glow
 Beneath your old gnarl'd crowns,
 Unmindful of Time's ebb and flow,
 Of Care's corroding frowns,
 While on the banks the red leaf lies,
 And over bend the autumn skies.

Dear Woods! the hour is charmed that brings
 Your presence once again,
 To hear the love the linnet sings,
 The wood-dove's pensive strain,
 And soothe my spirit with the song
 That croons your budding boughs among.

L'envoi.

Fall back, O years! I live once more
 The red-wine bliss of days of yore;
 Each branch, each bud, to me is door
 To dreams where light dwells evermore!

AFTER A STORM

I sit and watch the gloomful drift
 Of rain-cloud o'er the evening sky,
 Slow exodus, with partial rift
 Between the phalanx blowing by;
 The wrathful tempest pass'd but late
 In surly anger o'er the scene—
 Dark-brooding, like the scowl of hate,
 And vengeful as the tongue of spleen;
 It smote the Autumn peace to death;—
 Bent taut its bow of might and slew;
 Let loose the whirlwind of its breath,
 And swathed in black the tearful blue;
 Relentless, heedless, awesome, shod
 With fearful fire, and snorting hail,
 In direful deed at Pluto's nod,
 Plough'd path of flame like meteor trail!
 And ling'ring yet, in aerial keeps
 The lusty legions hold converse;
 Across the far cloud-carven steeps
 The lurid hosts burn in disperse,
 But fainter, as I watch the Night
 Come nearer to the weeping earth,
 To heal the wound of stormy spite,
 And lure it back to morning mirth.

I watch no more—the cooling lip }
 Bids me soft pillow all my care
 In restful trust, and sleeping, sip
 The peace of Him who sendeth her.

FLOWERS AND BIRDS

MY SNOWDROPS

ALL in their dainty gowns of white,
 Arrayed as if for bridal rite,
 Spotless, pure, and peerless,
 A virgin throng of snowdrops spread
 A milky way across my bed,
 Winter-worn and cheerless.

My garden bed, beshrewn and blank,
 Where throttled tangles, wan and lank,
 Spectre-like and sapless—
 The ghostly shreds, the shriven shells
 Of trailing peas, and jasmine cells,
 Are woe-begone and hapless.

Capricious airs, frost-burden'd, stirred
 Each drooping bell, the while I heard
 Dreamy, drowsy humming ;
 And lo ! sun-tempted, hardy bees
 Chimed in and out the nectaries
 And told me spring was coming !

Hope-vestured blossoms, song is meet
 For thee who darest wind and sleet,
 Breath of wrathful weather :
 Take thou my song, and give to me
 The secret of thy heart that we
 May chaunt of Hope together.

THE BLACKTHORN

THORN of the time when stressful gusts
 Of windy-temper, yoked with sleet,
 Wax arrogant in jealous thrusts,
 And smite the promise at thy feet—
 Dear pioneer
 Of May Day cheer,
 Thou claimest homage, and 'tis meet.

Fair consort of the violet, low,
 Beneath thy purple-spiked defence,
 Thy pyramid of clustering snow
 Doth captivate the wand'ring sense,
 Till love hath dived
 Like bees, and hived
 Sweet morsels for its sacraments.

I would that gath'ring, I might hold
 Thy beauty and its winsome spell,
 Might bear thee to my roof-tree fold
 Till all thou art thou shouldest tell :
 I pluck—and know
 The charm must go,
 As ebb the tides from stranded shell !

Of spring's divine enchantments, thou,
 With warbling finch, and budding leaf,
 Dost deck the young year's virgin brow,
 Beshadowed yet with wintry grief :
 Brave pioneer
 Of May Day cheer,
 For rose of June thou holdest brief !

TO AN EARLY ACONITE

METHINKS, dear flower, your cheery face
 Hath lit anew
 The flames the years have dimmed apace,
 Since I was young like you.

Sweet intercourse of innocence
 On budding ways,
 When cares were few as thought and pence,
 Dear, long-departed days !

Ye, with a glance old friendship owns
 Alone, dost peer
 Behind the porch's carven stones,
 And drawest closely near.

Ye hold the password to the bloom,
 The fruit of love ;
 The heart's warm revel finds ye room
 Where'er our footsteps rove.

The storied phrase, the courtly art
 Are left, as when
 The mellow friend speaks to the heart
 From out the world of men !

Dear homely blossom, robed in hint
 Of laughing Spring,
 Forgive, if miser-like, I mint
 Your golden offering.

And loudly tell my riches forth
 With gusty glee,
 Though prowls the fore-whelp of the north
 About your territory.

POPPIES IN THE CORN

WHEN swallows wheel their airy flight
 Within the mystic blue,
 And summer woods are putting on
 A softened, soberer hue ;
 When fields of scented grass and bent
 Are of their glory shorn,
 I love the deepening harvest ways,
 With poppies in the corn.

The jewelled briar has lost its rose,
 The hips are green and cold ;
 The downy nest is tenantless,
 The cuckoo's notes are told !
 The year is halting in its race,
 The Summer days are worn,
 And Autumn shows her ruddy face,
 With poppies in the corn.

The swallow soon will quit my eaves,
 The yellow grain be down,
 And Winter blow his icy blast
 Across the valleys brown ;
 Life's pleasures like the seasons go—
 As night succeeds the morn :
 Joy lifts its scarlet flame, and dies
 Like poppies in the corn.

AN ORCHARD OF PLUM BLOSSOM

PLUM blossom as surf—
 Frail flow'rets of foam—
 Tossed, broken, and braiding
 The rocks frowning purple :
 On a green breast upheaving,
 Multitudinous, mighty,
 A surging cohesion.

 The Bridal of Spring !
 Woven of cloud-sheen,
 The veil of the orchard :
 Aglow as the rounded
 And tremulous blue ;
 Glad as the songful
 Tide of the singer,
 Spilling his passion
 O'er the pavement of heaven.
 Prodigal, wasteful,
 A leavening fusion
 Of lightness and brightness
 Crowding the branch-ways :
 A riotous melody
 Unheard of the ear,
 Soundless, not soulless,
 Ecstasy fluting
 Its music in bloom !

Threshold of Promise :
Brimming with sweetness
The lips of the chalice,
Proffered, uplifted
In April's fair fingers,
Pressed to the parched-mouth
Of Hope long deferred :
First-fruits of Summer's
Ripe, redolent morrow,
Hasting, and pauseless
To earth's pure embracing.

DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH

THE day is cold, the light is failing,
 O'er the wold the wind is wailing,
 And the rain
 Drips upon the drifted leaves,
 Huddled underneath the eaves,
 That lid my window pane.

The sky is dark, the twilight slowly
 Swallows up, like thought unholy,
 Each fair grace ;
 While with frenzied tongue, and loud,
 Rules the tempest, panting, proud,
 O'er orchard, hill, and chace.

The fuchsias fail—their bells bestricken ;
 On the beds the mould-woof's thicken,
 Like a shroud—
 Where the June-bee mined her gold,
 Where from flowery belfry's tolled
 Dew-matins soft as cloud.

Ah ! me, without the winds aweary,
 Blow through the gloaming, cold, and dreary,
 And within
 Memories flood the haunted brain,
 Long-hush'd voices sing again
 With all the past shut in.

THE BLACKBIRD

TOP of the elms in the winter sun,
A piper shook with glee:
Piped in the ebb of the day nigh done,
And the song was sweet to me.

Never a flower in the grass below,
Never a leaf on tree;
The winds wailed only of tears and woe,
But stoutly and strong piped he!

Bird whose pæan is a call to cheer!
Throat of clarion ring:
Bird on the brow of the naked year,
Rousing the sleeping spring!

Never a lamb with the folded ewes:
Never a primrose hint;
The days fail soon, and the snow-winds fuse
The forsaken paths to flint.

Top of the elms in the winter sun,
Bird like a prophet true,
If the day is dumb—the landscape dun,
We forget it all in you;

Never a nest in the frosted thorn,
Never a crocus spear,
But over the elm-tops comes the morn,
And thy mate, O blackbird dear!

THE SPELL OF THE CUCKOO

Cuckoo, I know not if your note
 Be vanity or praise of spring :
 What matter, so your ditty float
 Where happy maids are primrosing,
 And blithe of heart is everything.

I love you, egotist of May,
 Who with reiteration light
 Dispenses us your simple lay,
 When earth takes on a new delight,
 And fields with buttercups are bright.

Above the withered mould of years,
 Peeps forth a tender green of grace,
 And by the brimming brook of tears,
 Some blossom still may find a place
 To show its half-forgotten face.

When, Cuckoo, your elusive song
 Breaks o'er the bluebell drift below,
 And to our graver mem'ries throng
 Sweet cherishings of long ago,
 Ere Time had filtered down its snow.

Not thankless is my heart, nor yet
 So thankful, that it has no crave
 For days ere yet the blossom set
 In manhood's sterner mould, and grave,
 And wood and fell found me their slave.

Yet years have little count, if still
 The heart warms to your merry lay
 As mine, dear Cuckoo, till it thrill
 With all the melody of May,
 And answers to your message—yea !

THE PEEWIT

FILLED with the eerie fall of the night,
Wet with the dews of Spring,
The fields fail fast in the waning light,
Like a bird on the homing wing :
Filled with a vision'ry, vague menace,
The landscape swoons of its gentle grace.

Back of the fallow, the wind-worn clouds
Blacken the golden reach,
Oozing and weltering in the shrouds
That buttress the ærial beach—
Blacken their coils like the lines of care
Over the pallid forehead of air.

Somewhere, cleaving the viewless gloom,
The peewit circles and chaunts
His wearyful note to the stars that loom
From their vapoury, misty haunts,
Wearyful—like some soul distraught,
In the sluices of maddening fury caught.

Hush, it is over ! The silence creeps
Down from the starlight still ;
Into the valley with bounds and leaps,
Strong of purpose and will :
Filled with peace of the night I wait
My summons to pass the enchanted gate.

IN A GORSE COPSE

An April Fancy

THE bird that nests among your bloom,
 Far more than I may guess
 Within your golden breast may find
 A poet's happiness !

In hues whose opulence may watch
 The sunset's royal glow
 Beneath whose living warmth, the shy
 Sweet April violets blow ;

The bright-winged moth, if epicure,
 Of dainties takes his fill,
 Flitting in fitful wantonness
 Free as the soft wind's will.

Surely such bowery lusciousness
 Might tempt long-sleeping fays
 To coquette in this copse again
 And grace these dreary days.

Nay, peradventure, as I dream,
 They throng with merry feet
 The nectared chambers, as of old
 In elfish grave conceit.

And if my fancy feeds on dreams,
 What could be better fare ?
 Joy is as lightsome as a lilt,
 And Spring is in the air !

TO AN OWL

BIRD of the ghostly hours, while nature sleeps,
 Thou holdest vigil through the friendless dark,
 High throned among the woody keeps
 Of unmolested park.

What is thy woeful cry? inimic, lone,
 It trembles forth upon the winter's night,
 Like some grim answer to the moan
 Of cavern'd surges' spite.

Far off, and shrill, the swift responding call
 Of watching mate comes from the gruesome main,
 Distinct above the sluices' fretful brawl,
 And all is still again!

Bird of the ghostly hours, my footstep scares;
 Unseen, I hear thy cleaving wings in flight!
 I came upon thee unexpected, unawares,
 Witch of the winter's night.

AN OPTIMIST

I HEARD him yestereve—a speech
 So musically clear,
 It lingers still upon my ear,
 And will for many a year;
 Yet did he neither plead nor preach,
 Or aught in jealousy impeach.

No warmth was in the sky, no sign
 Of flower, of bud, or bee;
 (I could not see as far as he)
 Yet so it seemed to me.
 That he did prophesy of wine—
 The Lotus-draught of love divine.

Blithe, hardy optimist! You ask
 His name and fame's degree?
 His pulpit was a beechen tree;
 He was a blackbird, bold, and free,
 Who knew his theme, and loved his task,
 And tore to shreds my moody mask.

THE POET AND THE BIRD

IN a beech-tree on the Cotswolds,—
 (So the wind-harps told it me)
There was fledged a gentle singer,
 A Woodland poet he.

Down below the primrose listened ;
 Here and there, a violet came :
Every day the beech grew brighter
 With the lustre of its fame ;

Through the day-dream, April ariels
 Plumed themselves upon the clouds,
Through the night the moon was watching,
 And the stars in milky crowds.

Thereunto an earth-born poet
 Ventured with his trembling reed,
Blew his longing to the singer,
 Begged of him a tiny meed.

But the minstrel's throat was silent,
 And the poet's wish in fee :
Hushed the song, and dead the singer—
 The poet of the beechen tree !

THE SONG OF THE ROBIN

ROBIN, the year has run away—
 Away from the cuckoo's note,
 Far, far away, from flowers of May
 That blossomed round his throat ;
 The yellow is on the apple tree,
 But Robin, thy song for me.

Robin, pippins are on the boughs---
 On boughs of the orchard ways,
 Sweet as the twilight-soften'd vows
 Will to Marjorie pays ;
 The russet is on the arbour tree,
 But Robin, thy song for me.

Robin, canker is on the leaf—
 The leaf the Summer sun kissed
 In honeymoon days, when never a grief,
 Beaded their brows with mist :
 Coral the fruit of the barberry tree ;
 But Robin, thy song for me.

Robin, the sickle is silent now ;
 Silent the glean'd stubbles, lone ;
 Cold are the winds that mournfully sough
 Over the thistles, blown ;
 Ripe is the hip on the hawthorn tree,
 And Robin, thy song for me.

THE ROBIN'S SONG

*(Last poem: Written at his old favourite home, Plas Tirion,
on his couch in the garden. September, 1907)*

I love the song
That trembles through the twilight's dusky gold,
When Autumn bids her shepherdesses fold
The recreant clouds that stray beyond the wold,
In rosy throng:

When slowly down
The upland's tawny stubble creeps soft-footed eve,
And o'er the blinking pools the white mists weave
Their vapoury wonders while their fingers thief
The Summer's crown!

The Robin's song!
Sweet as the garnered ripeness of the corn;
Its mellow chime floats from the scarlet thorn
To mingle with the fading day, the hope of morn—
And courage strong!

Dear songster! Thou
Shalt lesson me in melody whose tone
Is no chill requiem over fair things flown,
But rare content that makes a purple throne
Of barest bough!

THOUGHTS FROM THE SEA

THE WAVE

FLEEST thou, fugitive wave, for rest?
 Seekest for this the shore?
Cruel and cold is the rock's hard breast,
 And the lost have gone before!

Comest thou hither with vaunt, or fear?
 Tellest thou mirth or death?
Thy music seems akin to a tear,
 Reveal what thy white lip saith!

Under the reef are thy comrades slain
 (The black rocks ever slay)
The sands but drink, and forget the pain—
 Aye, drink, and forget alway!

UNDER THE CLIFFS

Abergeirch

HEWED by the God of storm and calm,
 Mighty in girth, and breast—
 Ribbed of a thousand moods of years,
 From shingle to lichened crest :
 Dumb—whate'er the seas may bring,
 Darkly, awfully, lone—
 O cliffs, what hauntings about you cling,
 What spells are around you thrown !

For you, the runes of ebb and flow—
 The white-witch dance of death !
 The flying march of the northern sand,
 The sting of the tempest's breath ;
 Round you wrangle the unquell'd moans
 Dying in caves of gloom,
 The tortured cries that have floated far,
 From swift and sudden doom !

I scan you—but you give no clue ;
 My mortal gaze is mocked ;
 I shudder with falt'ring feet below,
 Black scouts sternly locked—
 The earth-juice drips from vent and pores,
 Your cold heart awes and chills :
 O cliffs, what—what to you our dream—
 Our little day's brief ills ?

I touch your carven strength with mine,
 So frail, so fugitive—
I pluck the heath flower from your brow,
 That now your strength may live,
And passion deepens in my soul,
 O cliffs, God hewn, and strong,
Till brighter than the seas that roll,
 Thoughts that glow and throng!

ON THE SHORE

THE petrel's wing, the sighted sail—
 The glancing sunlight that doth pave
 The swelling corridors of wave—
 Dear morning gifts, I give thee hail!

Ye come upon my vision's light,
 From whence I do not know, or ask,
 Yet, being seen, the daily task
 Is burnished with a new delight!

The soft commotion of the sea,
 That beats its music to my feet,
 Methinks from spheres eternal greet
 The heir of immortality.

And wing and sail that come and go—
 The known—the unknown—what are they
 But servitors of that broad day
 Whose tides, e'en now, about us flow?

SEA-DOWNS

CALM, grand, and with unchanging grace,
 Ample, and wide, and sweet,
 With great green breasts to the zenith's eye,
 The sea-lips at their feet ;

Curved as the cheek of a maid—yet staid—
 Graven with countless years,
 Charged with a strength in breadth and length,
 Heedless of smiles and tears ;

How shall I sing the breeze-blown runes,
 That hold, like the folded rose,
 The secret heart of the calm and storm
 Of the sea that round them flows ?

Of the stately wing of the gull, and swing
 Of the billows on the shore—
 The rippling bliss of the summer's kiss,
 Or hurricane's awful roar ?

Let it suffice that Spring's young smiles,
 Lure me with lambs that dance
 To forgo and forget the quest and strife
 Of the weary world's mischance ;

Taking the gift of the day, while drift
 The idle tides and clouds
 Far off, and away from the things that slay
 And the cities' restless crowds !

ON THE SANDS

ON a lonely stretch of wind-swept bay,
 Where the breakers roar, and petrels play
 Winnowing weedy strands,
 With age bent low,
 In the wasting glow,
 An old man paced the sands:
The red sun sleeps, but the waves roll on,
The white crests sparkle ever;
The day may ebb, and the years be gone,
The heaving tides cease never.

A hulk, sea-scarred as the rocks that belt
 The white sea's passion'd wail and walt;
 Salt-lined, and tough, and taut;
 I watched him bide
 By the sun-kissed tide,
 As one long tired of port.
The red sun sleeps, but the waves roll on,
The white crests sparkle ever;
The day may ebb, and the years be gone,
The heaving tides cease never.

Clean swept his deck—a poor, waste drift—
 He waits the last round wave to lift
 His battered bark ashore,
 Where fearful shriek, and tortured cry,
 Shall beat their voice against the sky,
 No more, O sea, no more.
The red sun sleeps, but the waves roll on,
The white crests sparkle ever;
The day may ebb, and the years be gone,
The heaving tides cease never.

VOICES OF WIND AND SEA

O WINDS of the sea, your voices
 Over the headlands wide—
 Start—till it leaps—rejoices
 Raptures' exultant tide.

Bleached with the drought of cities
 I welcome, as the sands,
 The rush of the surges' ditties
 Over the hearkening strands—

Your breath, blown down from the heavens—
 Blown o'er the purging sea,
 Till it stirs in the blood, and leavens
 My being with ecstasy.

O sob, and murmur of ocean,
 Unutterable, great and strong,
 I hearken, till every motion
 Flows into my soul like song.

Nor envious how the sea-bird
 Hath liberty not mine,
 The morning gift by all things shared
 Is share of the divine!

THE CURFEW OF THE SEA-GULL

To my Wife

THRICE higher than the lordly cliff,
By lords of earth untrod,
A sea-gull at the curfew hour
Sang at the gates of God.

And mournfully, o'er lapping tides
That wash my heedless feet,
The weird wild notes drop down the air
My listening ear to greet.

Harmonious,—bird, and cry, and surge—
While brooding silence stills
The mind's disordered toss and swell
In thought's tumultuous mills.

Chant on, O bird of watery waste!
Thy note sets free for me,
Imprisoned longings of the soul,
Boundless as is thy sea:

Flow in, flow in, great deeps of God!
Fill in my shallows—spread
Thy healing waters till my heart
In peace is quieted.

NIGHTFALL ON THE SHORE

LONG since the lark's sweet litany
 Grew silent in the sky:
 With set of sun, the singer's glee
 And warmth and beauty die!

A lonely sea-bird's wing I hear,
 Unvisioned in the gloom—
 Mysterious, hauntful as a fear,
 About the billows boom.

The vagrant spirit of the deep
 Fills me with weird delight,
 While closer to the shadows creep
 The motherhood of night.

For me, for me, alone, the sea's
 Unquiet soul is stirred,
 Deep—deep, unslumbrous melodies
 That mock the sleeping bird:

Break over dusky reef and sands
 In deluges of song,
 For Rona's maid, with clasped hands—
 For ever fair and strong;

Make ready for their starry tryst
 No human eyes may see,
 But through the tapestries of mist
 Floats forth the revelry!

Cast out upon the constant tides—
 Inconstant mirth and woe—
 The sorrow and the joy of brides
 The sea kings only know.

BY THE SEA

O SEA, whose yesterdays no more may count,
 To-day—as yesterday—untired,
 Of ebb and flow, of storm and calm,
 And songs thy years have quired,
 How thy wildering, rhythm'd marches,
 Under cloud, and God's blue arches,
 Have for ever men inspired !

With ardours kindled of the fitful day
 Of moods as variant as the souls,
 Wide-bosomed, mothering broods of ships,
 Cradling great cargoes on thy rolls ;
 Cradling—unknown—the all unknowing—
 O sea, for ever flowing, flowing,
 Secret of deeps and syren shoals ;

Profound, incomparable, vested of God
 With mystery baffling men,
 Suggester—mocker of the inner quest—
 The shore-dark riddle of the Now and Then,
 How thy mighty, rhythm'd marches
 Under cloud in God's blue arches
 Have comforted, and will again !

NIGHT AND MORNING

UNTO THE NIGHT

BELOW a hawthorn—haunted knoll,
 Where nibbling sheep, in burrow, browsed,
 And scamp'ring rabbits, startled, stole
 To refuges of bank and bole :
 While amorous interchanges flasht
 Upon the windy currents, light,
 I stood to watch the daylight go
 Unto the night.

Ere yet the twilight stilled the song,
 Or hypnotised the festive dell,
 And wound about the sleepy throng
 Of folded wings secure and strong :
 For me the cloudy pageant rolled,
 Above the ridge—a flaming night—
 As there I watched the daylight go
 Unto the night.

And ev'ry homing cloud seemed charged
 With message of its noon-day quest :
 Back to the Western Gate enlarged,
 With gold and crimson glory marged,
 Each guise of beauty waxed and waned,
 And died upon the falt'ring sight,
 As awed, I watched the daylight go
 Unto the night.

O lustrous moments wrought of air,
 And fire that warms the tufted earth !
 My blinking sense cried out to share
 The glad, free, essence everywhere !
 But lo ! I knew ere that could be,
 And mine the crystal secret white,
 I should not heed the daylight go
 Unto the night.

THE THRESHOLD OF THE NIGHT.

WHEN the moon of winter lifts her radiance on
the snow,
When one by one the shadows clothe the
moments as they go,
When all the wonder of the day fades on my
wond'ring sight,
How beautiful and still the hour that borders
on the night:
The winter's night, with crystals crowned, and
mute, with frozen airs,
Below the glistening mound of white the low
wind scarcely stirs!
The soft clouds fold on fold unveil beyond the
glazing trees,
And here and there a trembling speck tells out
star mysteries:
The silence deepens on the soul—the silence of
the snow—
Of moon, and stars, and dusky cloud, and
drowsy earth below,
And night takes up her witcheries, and paces
to and fro.

MOONRISE

UP amid the sweet blue spaces,
 Fleck'd with amber, gold, and red,
See the new moon's silver crescent,
 Like a burnish'd sickle spread !

Down behind the belt of fir-wood,
 Drops the sun, and all is still :
And the pine-trees' shadow darkens,
 And the mists wrap round the hill.

Deeper is the weird enfolding,
 'Till each day-charm fades from sight,
And the shining silver crescent
 Starts the marches of the night.

IN THE WINTER TWILIGHT

HERE, underneath the old church tower,
Where darkness grows apace,
There comes within this twilight hour
A sweet subduing grace.

Peace with a noiseless footfall steals
O'er mossy mound and wall,
The earth at her calm altar kneels,
And silence covereth all.

Now hold we fellowship with forms
Invisible by day,
The quicken'd fire of Fancy warms
Into a kindlier ray ;

The angel of the night descends
With rich gift-laden hands,
Pure as the sphere that overbends
The flowerless Winter-lands ;

I take the proffered gift and learn
The secret stair to rest,
Beside the quenchless stars that burn
Above earth's shadowed breast.

NIGHT WINDS

I HEAR the windy clamours
 Shriek past my postern gate,
 And knock with air-flung hammers,
 Like couriers loud and late ;
 I listen to the tramping
 Of choristers of snow,
 With strange and fearful anthems,
 And wonder whence they go !

And are they guests—or singers—
 Or spirits, craven, lean—
 Whose bloodless, viewless fingers
 Some spectre harvests glean ?
 What mirth, or madness, is it,
 What freakish, frenzied might,
 That hoots adown the chimney,
 That fills the clammy night ?

I care not, for my ingle
 With festive flame is warm ;
 I sit, to dream, and mingle
 With the wind-scouts of the storm ;
 They chant their eerie dirges,
 They crouch, and bound, and weep ;
 I let them rave, and lure me
 To dusky isles of sleep.

THE CRADLE OF THE DAY

O VIOLET-SCENTED winds that rock
 The cradle of the morn,
 Cool as the moss's velvet frock,
 Where giddy spates are born,
 Unloose your silver veils of mist :
 The valleys wait, the glad birds list !

O guarding sentinels of cloud,
 Put out the stars, and set
 The portals wide with shoutings loud
 From height to height, and let
 The warm light dance adown the hills,
 And wake to song the mimic rills.

O buds, the May is come, is come—
 The fair, blue day of Spring :
 The cuckoo calls, and truant hum
 Marks out the bee's bright wing :
 While sweet delight like nectar lies
 To fill our cup with fresh supplies.

O virgin airs, that blowing straight
 From off the hills of Day,
 With earth's divinest things to mate,
 And loveliest to play,
 Blow morning through my heart, and bring
 Once more to me the bliss of Spring !

MORNING COMES

O SLEEPLESS eyes through watches dark,
 Whose lids in vain
 Forbid the day's usurping greed,
 To yoke the brain
 With fears that waste the silent hours :
 Whose hunger-famish'd strength devours :
 The morning comes again !

O ghostly thought, whose wings outstrip
 The howling wind,
 To beat against the star-sprent height,
 Through midnight blind :
 Unsatisfied thou comest back,
 All wearied with the phantom wrack :
 The morning comes again !

O futile plans, the mocking guise
 Of baffled skill :
 The ideals lost through doubt and death,
 The truant will—
 The watches wane, the shadows go,
 From hills of dawn the spices blow,
 The morning comes again !

MORN

SPHERED by the new-born blue of Day,
With silver wings,
The virgin morn betook her way
With carolings.

The great woods listened ; more and more
Did shadows lift
From off their massy brows, and o'er
Their crowns a rift

Of gladness chase the gloom afar,
And twinkling leaves
Shake out their laughter like a star
On summer eves.

The golden valleys heard, and smiled ;
The reapers bent
Among the braided grain, beguiled
From discontent ;

The ploughman on the upland strode
A firmer gait,
Till bloomy furrows rose and glowed
In glist'ning state.

And all in white the river danced
Through green and gold,
With eyes of blue, half-shyly glanced
At rushes bold ;

Cooed to the lilies, rippled by
A weathered punt,
And fisherman with tranquil eye
On float in front ;

Gave back the flash of swallows' flight ;
And flow'ry pride
Below the willows cool and light
On either side.

From cottages the children ran
With eager feet,
To prosecute the latest plan
In sweet conceit ;

Down briary lane to laugh and sing—
Rare roundelay—
Till matin bell of school shall ring
Their sport away.

Sphered by the new-born blue, old earth
Repeats again,
The virgin rapture of her birth
To gladden men !

UP ROSE THE DAY

UP rose the day, undaunted, bold,
 On wrathful fury bent!
 All through the dark and gusty night
 The winds had raged unspent,
 And still they lifted up their voice, and shook
 themselves with glee,
 And blew their notes from bough to bough like
 roar of northern sea!

The fitful light, affrighted shrank
 Behind the stormy clouds,
 That gath'ring strength, their banners raised
 In high fantastic crowds;
 And down through shadowy meadows came the whirl-
 wind of the blast,
 And rush of ringing rain and hail fell furious
 and fast.

Then grew the day up toward the noon,
 With halting step and slow,
 The heavens brooded dark and dull,
 Like mourners wrapped in woe,
 The sun a moment shot a glance across the rain-
 rimm'd land.
 Then hastened with a wan, wet face from such
 a cheerless strand.

But as the wintry daylight ebb'd,
 The stubborn clouds gave way,
 A tender beauty stood revealed,
 Beyond the belted gray,
 The great gales slept in slumber deep, the even-
 ing rose in peace,
 The anger of the storm was o'er, its soul had
 found release!

PAST AND FUTURE

CHRISTMAS

ONCE more the berried thorn—the bells—
 Frost's tonic in the air,
The silence over wood and fells,
 Snow wonder everywhere.

Once more the cradle-song—the child—
 Tale of the manger birth ;
The lusty carol, while leaps wild
 The Yule-log's ruddy mirth !

Once more the touch, the lip, the look
 Of goodwill—gracious, sweet,
The warm breath of the ingle nook
 To welcome wandering feet.

O Christmas, ever green, and great,
 With Christly love and grace,
Blot out the world's hard greed and hate,
 Purge thou the stricken place !

Evoke men's slumb'ring good, and give—
 Guest welcome, give us this—
The Christian power to help us live
 Unyoked of cowardice.

YULE-TIDE

EVANGEL of the wayworn year,
 With ermine scarf, and winds a-blowing,
 Our fathers loved thy honest cheer,
 Thy presence pure as snowdrifts growing ;
 Time, dire in ravage, hath no will
 Of conquest o'er thy deathless story,
 For us the yule-log, flaming still,
 Rekindles mem'ry, loved and hoary.

Within thy radiance men have seen
 An ideal nobler than the present :
 A dream like unto shimmering sheen
 That trembles round a young moon's crescent ;
 And following the transfigured light,
 In kindly deeds have given token
 Of Love's eternal, matchless might,
 Of selfish bonds for ever broken.

Absorbed in life's tumultuous things,
 On plan and purpose deeply brooding,
 Where is the heart whose voiceless strings
 Have answered not the snows intruding ?
 Or walked unheeding as the flakes
 The old familiar path effaces,
 And banished thought, aroused, awakes,
 To lead us to forgotten places ?

The lost regained, the fruitless past
 Forgiven, cancelled—good re-quicken—
 A rainbow through the tearfall, fast—
 A bud on trees neglect had stricken—
 A dawn upon a long, black night—
 A shore through surf of angry ocean—
 A leaf unstained, a purged sight—
 A rest to Toil's whirlwind of motion.

So men have dreamed ; so dream they still ;
The white wreath of old Christmas ever
Doth cover with profoundest skill
The failures of life's frail endeavour ;
Sets Hope aflame in burden'd breast,
The lusty tides of Love a-flowing,
Great gift of God, the sweet, the blest,
With ermine scarf and winds a-blowing.

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW

METHOUGHT I stood in the palace of Time,
 On an eve of yesterday:
 The lights had paled, and the winds bewailed—
 The old year dying lay—
 On his snow-cold bier,
 On that night so drear,
 His spirit was passing away.

I was not alone in that palace fair,
 A motley group was by—
 The young and old, and the weak and bold,
 Rich and poor drew nigh
 To the shrouded bier,
 On that night so drear,
 To watch the old year die.

Then out spake he to the wond'ring crowd,
 Though his voice was faint and low—
 "Live while you may, work, watch, and pray,
 The future from past will grow,
 To-day is the sowing,
 To-morrow the blowing
 Of harvests of joy or woe."

Darkness fell o'er the palace of Time,
 On that eve of yesterday:
 The great bells toll'd o'er city and wold,
 The year had passed away:—
 On the ice-cold bier,
 In that midnight drear,
 The old year lifeless lay.

.

I heard a stir in the palace halls,
The gates were opened wide !
And a form I had never seen before,
Came swiftly through the morning door,
And stood by the old year's side.

Then clash'd the bells o'er the world again,
Telling of hope and cheer,
And I knew by the light on the radiant face,
That he who had taken the vacant place,
Was the bright—the glad New Year !

A FAREWELL MONOLOGUE

THE hearth is red with Yule-log light,
 The year far spent ;
 The last day drops unto the night,
 And to a long eternal flight,
 Its course is bent.

Come near ! my friend of many days,
 Come, let me look
 Thy features o'er within the rays,
 That half in sadness seems to blaze
 About the ingle nook.

Time hurries thee, I know, but yet
 I urge my plea :
 It is so easy to forget —
 Life's best things go so soon, so let
 Me talk with thee !

What if the boughs are bare, old friend,
 Where nests were built :
 No more the song-birds' notes ascend,
 And flowers have found untimely end,
 Their nectar spilt ?

What if some suns went down in cloud,
 That rose so fair,
 And Hope is swath'd in ghostly shroud,
 And Fears, a grim and clam'rous crowd,
 Have block'd the stair ;

The Western skies have fill'd with light,
 As fills the moon ;
 The warm wings of the summer's night
 Has nourished into shapeful sight
 A radiant noon !

So ever as the hours have flown
Each one has brought
Its other self, that not alone
Should sorrow be, or mishap's moan
Seems fateful sport.

For He, whose high commission thou
Dost simply do,
Asks no unmeaning, thoughtless bow
To chance and change, but to allow
The Future view.

Thou goest whither all have fled,
The *New* I face!
Across the hills the light is spread,
Hope beckons from the valley's dead,
Heart, take thy place!

THE LONG AGO

THE Yule-log blazes as of yore,
 The wild bells clash across the snow ;
 The waits are muffled at the door,
 As in the long ago ;
 The rafters ring, the children sing,
 Around the hearthstone red,
 But swifter than the snowflakes, wing
 The dreams of days long dead !

O voices from the buried years,
 Ye mingle with our own to-night,
 And melt our gladness into tears,
 For lov'd ones out of sight :
 The saintly face, the gentle grace,
 Are pictured on the walls—
 But in the heart's best hiding place
 The accents Love recalls !

No ghostly, clammy errand yours,
 Dear forms that visit us again ;
 Your soul-seen presence cheers, assures
 Our hearts to-night as then ;
 We fear no spell, no gruesome knell
 On joys and quick desires,
 That leap through youthful veins as well
 As erst they did their sires.

Come, lips that shaped sweet words of old—
 Come hands with claspings strong—
 Come, features with diviner mould—
 Come, heart, and voice, and song!
 The rafters ring, the children sing,
 Around the hearthstone red,
 And with the Christmas carols, spring
 The flowers of days long dead.

.

*Glow, ruddy beams of firelight, glow,
 Ring out wild bells across the snow;
 Love is not vain
 That lives again
 In dreams of long ago.*

.

THE CENTURY'S SUNSET

THE Century, like a long-drawn tale,
 Is told—the last worn page
 In Time's old volume turn—we hail,
 To prophet's eyes, the Golden Age!

The stars still marshal nightly fires
 Above earth's change and rue,
 Still voiceful are the tidal choirs
 That wake the Old and New;

If promise slumbers in the bud,
 Nor yet the watchman cries
 "The morning breaks above the flood,
 Lift up, lift up the eyes;"

Our sires, who sowed, saw not the gold
 Of Harvests such as we
 Blow to fruition o'er the wold
 Of worlds from sea to sea.

Hope dies not with the garnered years—
 The grave breeds finer strength;
 And through the vapours, mists, and tears,
 God's light shall dawn at length!

Watch, if ye will, where stiff and cold
 The worn-out Century sleeps;
 Watch ye! and then with passion bold
 On to the Future's steeps!

Life lifts through Time's tempestuous gray
 The rosy peaks of Morn;
Ours are the ears of Yesterday,
The sheaves, our sons unborn!

THE YEAR IS GOING

THE pear hangs red, and redbreast sings,
 On the bough where sits decay;
 The sun-flower flames below, but brings
 A pang with its bold array.

I cannot suppress the pain that comes
 Like a bolt of quivering fire;
 I only know how the vision numbs
 And changes my feast to mire.

I have lived and loved in the summer's sun :
 I have hived, like bees, sweet things :
 But the pear hangs red, the day is done,
 And only the robin sings !

The year is going—like a silent ebb—
 Going, as goes a friend,
 While Memory sits and spins her web
 O'er joys of untimely end !

I have nought to say : my sorrow flowers,
 While the frost consumes the leaf ;
 Farewell ! I pluck the red-ripe hours,
 And the redbreast soothes my grief.

ON THE THRESHOLD

UNWEARIED Winter, on the brow of Spring,
 Must bind his own.
 What matters it the thrushes sing
 Below his throne?
 They are but trespassers, and he
 Lord of the mountain territory.

Sing louder, O ye birds, on budding bough,
 Though dawns comes slow;
 The seagull's snow-wings flower the plough,
 And March winds blow.
 The lambs are truant from the fold:
 Sing louder, birds—be bold, be bold!

Let not his hoarse voice hinder your sweet task—
 Love, youth, and light
 Are yours, and ours—in hope. We ask—
 Give of your might!
 He who rebukes shall be the trespasser,
 When April shepherds through the fields of air.

THE CRAG

OVER the sea-ward crag the blue
 Of the Summer noon is sleeping :
 There—where the gales of Winter flew,
 And hurricane seas were sweeping,
 Down the ledge, to the darkling edge,
 Sheer to the tides far under,
 Spreads to-day the heather gay,
 A dream of purple wonder.

Barren through Winter waste and strife,
 Hooded of mist and sadness,
 Stern and cold as the angry life
 Of the awful watery madness ;
 Does it forget the wrack and fret—
 The storm's imperious scorning,
 Decked to-day in heather gay
 Bright in September's morning?

“ Come blue, come black—come sun or shade
 I hold myself undaunted :
 Keep my heart as no man or maid,
 In the world by mortals haunted !
 For seas may break, and tempests shake
 The grass that dies to-morrow,
 The purple plaid is the secret, lad,
 Of strength that beareth sorrow.”

BEHIND — BEFORE !

(A new Year's Reflection)

BEHIND—the unscaled summits that smote the
 aching sight ;
 The valley, ploughed by failure—the torrent's
 mad despite—
 Unbridged, unforded, mocking; its angry menace
 ever
 In heart and ear deriding irresolute endeavour !
 BEHIND—the baffling mirage—the morass, grim
 and green,
 Defeat bleached into memories of all that might
 have been :
 The chill of disappointments—the bivouacs of
 care,
Behind, behind, O, heart of mine, what bitter-
 ness is there !
 Yet hark thee, angels beckon ; *before* thee—height
 to height,
 The virgin Future lifteth its hope upon thy
 sight :
 Up! up! if faint, pursuing—in patience hold
 thy soul,
 Nor ask of Fate a pittance, of Chance a beggar's
 dole.
 If sycophants waylay thee, or sophists bid thy
 ear,
 Press on, pray on, reliant, God's thought out-
 lives the year,
 Earth—dust may soil the moment, the white
 hereafter gives
 Its coronal of conquest to him who dying—
 lives !

THE YESTERDAYS

O YESTERDAYS that are no more,
 I think I hear your ghostly tread—
 As soft as snow-fall—at my door;
 I wait you with uncovered head.

The torches of the Year burn low,
 The ashes of dead fires bestrew
 My lonely chamber—still as snow—
 But all I have I give to you.

Come in, companions of the Past—
 A fragrance in your garments clings—
 As precious fruits that ripen last
 Hold longest breath of juicy Springs.

Transfigured through the tender haze
 Of Time's deserted, leafless aisles,
 O gentle throng of Yesterdays
 Your features wear celestial smiles.

But in Love's morning of delight,
 I read not so each saintly grace;
 Nor in the currents black as Night
 That caught me in their foulsome race!

Nor sheafless in the harvesting—
 When others stored, and I alone,
 In Want's keen, awful torturing,
 Felt naked as a Desert bone;

Nor yet when passion's lurid flames
 Leapt on the altar of Desire,
 And unconsumed, consuming shames
 Found fuel for the hungry fire;

Nor when the unseen Archer sped
 His dark-plum'd arrow with intent,
 And left me with my idol dead,
 Without my quiv'ring heart's consent.

Forgive, O God, the foolishness,
 The angry mood, the hasty word,
 That smote Thy Throne when black distress
 Swept through me like a prairie herd ;

Forgive the eyeless wrath that slew
 The baleful hours with steely thought,
 And all the mangled moments threw
 At Fate, defiant, and distraught.

And you, O Yesterdays, who come
 Unsought around my hearth to-night—
 Your glory vanish'd, voices dumb—
 I bow me to your mystic might.

While out below the frosty skies,
 You beckon forth the latest hour,
 Go ! last of all the year—my eyes
 Are toward To-morrow's dawn and dower !

THE MORTAL, AND DYING YEAR

MORTAL, eternal silence nears !

I go
Unto the dust of gathered years ;
My life is low,
The death-winds blow
About my bier washed with a rain of tears.

Befriend thine ears—the rabble shout,
Unheed ;
Nor counselled be by Cynic's pout,
The miry creed—
Of selfish greed,
The strident jest of cold, unfostering doubt.

Unshuttered senses teasing go :
List then,
Ere shades eternal round me throw
A veil from men ;
Take thou a pen,
I have some alms of speech—make record slow.

I gave thee seed for sowing—where
The flower
My seasons sought in gardens fair,
Through sun and shower,
The blessed dower,
Of God to breezeless wastes, and stifling air ?

I gave thee blocks for stair and tower,
Unhewn—
Uncarved they lie, the arrowed hour
To moss and rune,
Forgot—bestrewn
With dirt and drift that should have praised
thy power.

I gave thee strength thou hast mislent
 Toward goals
 Ignoble, and of coarse content,
 Whose ashy doles,
 Like ghostly coals
 Hold only dust of kindlings long since spent.

I gave thee Truth for pure embrace,
 Whose eyes
 For ever cloudless, hold the grace
 Of morning skies ;
 But cold surmise
 On tiptoe flings her frost upon thy face.

I gave thee arrows for the chase ;
 And spoil
 Did promise, did'st thou up and brace
 Thy thews to toil ;
 Thou mad'st recoil ;
 Behold ! another holds the conquered place !

I gave thee Love, with lute and string,
 And train
 Flower-skirted like the breasts of spring,
 To soften pain,
 To hallow gain,
 And lead, through ruth, to God's best triumphing.

I set before thee ideals, high,
 And true ;
 Parnassus choired to draw thee nigh
 To bound'ries blue ;
 To knowledge new
 Thy effort, soaring languished, fell to die.

I proffered patience, wisdom, mirth—
 God's meed
To toiling man, and clouded earth,
 In triple need ;
 But little heed
Thou gavest, gold seeking—travailling from
 thy birth.

Unsated, scornful mortal, hark !
 Time wastes
No gift of God ; learn thou, and mark
 Thy strange distastes ;
 To-morrow hastes,
Forget the past, greet thou its singing lark !

THE RUGBY PRESS
RUGBY

This book is DUE on the last
date stamped below

10m-11,'50 (2555) 470

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 370 109 1

PR
4759
H4325A17
1912

